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A CHILD OF THE MORNING

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[Frontispiece

A CHILD OF THE MORNING

MEMOIR AND LETTERS OF
RENÉE DE BENOIT

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Translated from the French by
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FOREWORD

THE pages that follow are not a biography.

We have simply acceded to the wish expressed by numerous friends that a few letters and notes might be published of one who has been so soon and so suddenly taken away from us.

We thought it best to let her tell for herself the story of her spiritual life. No literary effect has been aimed at in these papers, but merely the collecting together of private and personal letters.

The youthful and ingenuous character of these enclosures has been respected by us, so that every one may read, to the full depth of this soul, and follow step by step the work of the Spirit.

If it has cost us something to make these letters public, yet we have done so, asking God to bless the book in all its simplicity, and to use it to bring to many readers a fuller and happier consecration in the service of Jesus Christ.

A. VAN B.



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A CHILD OF THE MORNING

CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH, 1892-1910

RENÉE was the third daughter of the eight children of Colonel Paul van Berchem and Alice van Berchem, *née* Necker.

She was born on June 21, 1892, at the Château de Crans on the banks of the Lake of Geneva.

In her early childhood Renée was a tiny and rather delicate little creature, with large, deep blue eyes, fringed with long lashes. She was easily frightened at the approach of strangers, when she would flee to her mother's arms and nestle against her shoulder.

But if she was timid in the presence of strangers, she was certainly fearless in all games and physical exercises. She would take venturesome leaps, and clamber up the most dangerous places. She was also wonderfully steady handed, and her mother can still see her, at nine years old, coming into her room, carrying on one arm with perfect ease her baby brother of a few weeks old, and in the other hand a tray with a cup of tea.

Renée's childhood developed happily in the beautiful surroundings of Crans, among her seven brothers and sisters, and a merry party of boy and girl cousins.

Always ready to make herself useful, to look after the younger children, and give way to the elder, she loved to forget herself.

Sometimes, if at table she was given a larger pear or peach than her neighbour, she would watch for a chance to change it unobserved. Often when starting for a fine long walk with her sisters and cousins, she would turn back and say to her mother : " You will be all alone, mother, would you like me to stay with you ? " and on her return her first thought was to ask whether her mother also had passed a pleasant day. Gifted with an intuitive perception of other people's thoughts and wishes, she would forestall them with a readiness that was the outcome of her own loving heart. By her even temperament, Renée contributed greatly toward an atmosphere of joy and peace in the family life.

Renée was eleven years old when she lost her grandmother, Mme. Necker. It was her first great sorrow, and she never forgot the text which her grandmother gave her on her death-bed : " By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye love one another."

The close attachment of the four elder sisters became deeper and stronger as they grew older, and the sweet memories of childhood and youth, common to them all, united them by indissoluble ties. Although, later, their marriages and different vocations in life parted and scattered them beyond the seas, nothing could weaken their mutual affection, and Renée especially kept up a close correspondence with each one of them.

Very early this young soul was drawn to God, as by a strong magnetic force. The Bible became her favourite book. Regularly every morning she wrote down in a notebook, which she called her " Book of Wonders," one text with which she connected other references suggested by her daily reading.

One day, at a gathering of Christian Unions, which combined a large number of girls of the neighbourhood, the subject of the necessity of confessing Christ was impressed upon them, and the young people were invited to take the opportunity of giving their testimony. After a few minutes of silence, Renée, whom everybody knew to be timid and reserved, rose, and said quite simply, but with great sincerity and fervour, “I love Jesus, and I want to be His servant.”

These few words, spoken in obedience to the inward prompting of the Spirit of God, were the means of opening other mouths. God blessed this earliest testimony, and marked with His seal this young servant, who wrote shortly afterwards : “Now I have the peace of God in my heart.”

During the winters from 1904 to 1907 Renée had to pass some time in the mountains, on account of weak lungs, the result of a violent attack of whooping-cough. She wrote from the mountains :

“I am happy, very happy, because Jesus has not only pardoned me, but He has already given me some victories over myself. Christ has strengthened me with this text : ‘Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you’ ; and since He Himself has chosen me I can commit myself to Him with perfect confidence knowing that He can do all things, even for me, who have offended Him in so many ways.”

Renée’s studies were necessarily hindered by these visits to the mountains. She was always very nervous and distrustful of herself, and she never had a very good memory, but she was so conscientious and industrious, and likewise so anxious to please her masters, that she achieved very good results at school. She was a great

admirer of Nature, and loved a country life, and the beautiful summers at Crans, the Easter holidays spent at the Château de Vufflens, and the time spent in the mountains, where she could enjoy to the utmost the pleasure of long walks.

Twice she travelled into Italy, the first time to the Lake Maggiore with her parents and sisters, and afterwards she accompanied her father and her sister, Yvonne, to Bologna, Florence, and La Maremma, where she enjoyed riding. She always looked back with the greatest pleasure upon this tour.

With the wish of being useful to others less favoured than herself, Renée spent the summer of 1909 at Burtigny, helping in the Orphanage of "La Maison."¹ This time was beneficial to her in two ways: first, by being associated with such a work of faith and love, of labour and self-denial, and then by making her appreciate more the advantages of her own lot.

The following are extracts from her letters at this time :

[*To her Mother.*]

August 20, 1909.

If I could draw, I could make a lovely sketch from this spot. Sitting under a bush at the edge of a cornfield, where a dozen children are gleaning, I have before me a magnificent view of cornfields, meadows, and the plain where I try to distinguish our dear Crans—where I sometimes long to be—

¹ This Institute, founded in 1899 by M. le Pasteur Moreilon, on the same faith principles as the famous orphanages of George Müller at Bristol, makes no financial appeals, but relies on the hand of God for the daily bread of the fifty or sixty orphans who are brought up in it.

then the Lake and the mountains, which are splendid from here. Now I have been a week at Burtigny. I am beginning to get used to this new life and to make myself a bit useful.

We get up at five o'clock, and then get the little ones up and we have prayers. I am responsible for the children between four and eight years old. Just now it is holiday time, and the harvest is going on, so we are out of doors almost all day, either gleaning or in the wood. I do a little of everything. The other day, as there were not enough big boys available to get in the hay, I took a hand with the rake, and learnt how to make the haycocks. I am getting accustomed to the ways of this house, but I assure you that I appreciate, and shall appreciate more in future, all the comforts of our delightful home.

I am very glad, however, to have come here, for it has opened my eyes to so many things that I used to enjoy, but did not at all value, as I hope I shall do now. I think much of the great difference there is between some lives and others, and I am very glad to see at close quarters the sort of life that they live here. What care and attention to economize even the smallest thing. Really there is nothing, absolutely nothing, wasted.

[*To her Sister, Anne, who was staying in England.*]

You may be very sure that your 40 francs have been well spent. Only once has Sister Cécile spoken

to us about money, and again when yours arrived. One fine morning there was no more flour in the house, and no bread except a few loaves which would not go far (for every week we consume 150 big ones). The morning when this occurred, Sister Cécile received 5 francs with this text : "Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." You can imagine this sum was not enough, and it was absolutely necessary to send for the flour the following day as the cart had been already ordered to go down to the mill. God was ready with His answer, for the next morning, just before the cart went away, Sister Cécile received 100 francs. . . .

Toward the end of my stay here, Sister Cécile and I visited several other charitable institutions. I think that unless you saw them you could scarcely imagine such human miseries. That day I saw and learnt many things. How happy we are, and how highly privileged ! What suffering there is in the world, and what fearful dramas are being enacted close beside us of which we know nothing !

[*To her Sister on her Birthday.*]

August 26, 1909.

May this year which is just closing, and which will never return, leave something behind for you ; may you be happy, and may you learn to be happy. Seek for happiness. It is a duty ; but don't make

your own happiness the first consideration ; seek that of others, and you will find your own. . . .

Yes, as to both of us, our steps are very short and very tottering in the path which we have chosen, but they will become firm, and our pace more rapid. By the New Birth, or the Birth from Above, the foundation of a new building has been laid within us. On this foundation the Holy Spirit, like a Divine Architect, has begun to build, and He will carry on His work to completion, to a perfect likeness of the Divine Model (2 Cor. iii. 18).

[*To her Sister.*]

September 21, 1909.

I am now—and I wish so much that you were also—surrounded as by a dazzling light. I am happy, more than happy ; I have given up all to God. But to arrive at that, God has led me through terrible struggles, through frightful doubts.

You know that sometimes when you had these doubts I could not understand you very well ; the existence of God, His love, all that, seemed to me more than evident. But, at the Convention at Chexbres, it was as if God was hiding His face, and giving me up to myself, and to evil. All those hymns that were sounding in my ears, the Christian language which was in every mouth, were repugnant to me. Mother could not tell what was the matter with me. I did not go to dinner that day, and in

my room I sobbed. Oh, it was so awful ! I could not pray. . . .

Little by little I felt that God was asking me to give myself to Him entirely, and I saw clearly in a moment what all that meant, so clearly that I shrank from the gift and the complete sacrifice. To give one's whole life without restriction to a Being called our Creator, but Whom no one had ever seen or known ! No, I could not do it. . . .

The next morning I was so unhappy that I left the tent and the meetings, and I went down to the shore of the Lake. After climbing over the railing of a landing-stage, I sat down on the great rocks close to the water's edge, and there I cried to God and I told Him that I would not move till He had gained for Himself the victory over me.

After fresh struggles suddenly I was able to say sincerely : "I give myself." How beautiful it was ! I felt myself in the arms of the one living God, the God of Love, Who had chosen me, Who had suffered me to pass through those hours of darkness in order that the victory should be the more perfect. God is so good ! I feel crushed by the thought of my unworthiness in view of all His goodness.

My darling, I wanted to write all this to you. I have said nothing about it to any one except mother, and I want my conduct to speak to everybody else. I want you to know all about my joy, my happiness, and my loving prayers for you, that we may walk together with radiant faces, illuminated

by the presence of God. God is now showing me my sin, and is humbling me before Him so deeply. How much of evil, how many dark corners there are in me, and how many things that are not according to His Will! What happiness to be in the hands of a faithful and loving God, and to have His Word so full of beautiful promises!

In the autumn of this year, Renée's health was again causing anxiety; an attack of appendicitis was followed by renewed delicacy of the lungs. The following blessed experience she describes in a letter to her mother:

Our little circle here are all quite well, and myself best of all. Oh, darling mother, I thank God with all my heart, for He has cured me. I will tell you all about it. The first few days I was here, I felt a little anxious, as I had a pain in my right side. Then one evening, when quiet in my bed, I asked God to cure me, believing that He was not only all-powerful but all-loving, and that He would do it. In fact, the following evening I felt no more of it.

How happy I was then, and am still! God has shown me that if my body needed healing, my soul needed it still more; and if I ask Him for this as I did for the other, I believe He will grant it. I have just been reading a magnificent Psalm, the 20th: "Some trust in chariots and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God. They are cast down and fallen, but we are

risen and stand upright." That is beautiful, is it not ?

God did indeed work wonderfully : for Renée was radically cured of the complaint, and never again needed a stay in the mountains.

[*To her Sister.*]

December 5, 1909.

If you are sorrowful, hide the sorrow, and comfort those near you who are more sad than you. . . . I want you to be happy, and if I were to advise you I should say: Try every day to give pleasure to some one else. I have tried to do so lately, and whenever I have succeeded I have felt happy at night. Generally they are only quite little things that one can do, but it is always the same.

[*To her Sister.*]

VUFFLENS, March 23, 1910.

Here we are at Vufflens, and we are enjoying our holidays immensely, the ravines, and the beautiful weather ! We are out of doors all day, taking long walks and laying stepping-stones across the river. It is delightful ; the little ones are overjoyed. In a few weeks, or even a few days, we shall see you again ! What happiness ! Which of us will be the happier ? Soon it will be my turn to go to England, and I think, perhaps, that I shall long to return home more than you do. We shall see.

It is rather nice to feel the unknown in front of one. Anyhow I am sure of one thing ; it is that everywhere one can, and one ought, to be happy and joyful.

Dear sister, don't get too serious nor too wise ; be a child a little longer. When we are back at Crans we will have a jolly time laughing, singing, skipping for joy ; we will enjoy everything, but most of all loving and being loved. I have a crowd of ideas in my mind for these long holidays : drawing, painting, botanising—that is fascinating ! Life is so rich, so full ; Nature so grand, so magnificent ! I do so pity the people who suffer with “ennui”—it is so unnatural ; we ought to enjoy everything. It is God's Will that we should be happy, and one of His commandments is “ Rejoice evermore.”

CHAPTER II

IN ENGLAND, 1910-1911

FIRST CALL TO THE MISSION FIELD

In July 1910, Renée, accompanied by her mother, started for England, where she was to spend a year.

A first visit to Keswick to attend the Christian Convention, which is held there every year, placed her in touch with English religious life, and opened up to her mind fresh horizons. After her mother left, Renée joined the "Children's Special Service Mission," which was working on the beach at Sandown. It was here that she had her first experience of evangelistic work.

. . . If God should make use of me to draw one soul to Him, how joyful I should be !

[*To her Mother.*]

SANDOWN, August 10, 1910.

My stay here has done much to cure me of my timidity. On Sunday, while people were coming out of the churches, we distributed programmes of the mission services. Monday was the first service on the beach, an immense beach, where two of us

went about inviting the children to come to the open-air meetings. This morning it was my turn ; it is not very easy for me on account of the language —some of the family groups are very formidable to get at—but I have this word with me, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me,” and I go forward as boldly as possible.

God has shown me that if I cannot do much outwardly, I can always work inwardly by prayer, and that is the best way of all.

September 4, 1910.

They have asked me to speak at our last service. To speak in English ! I have been thinking that if God asked me to do it, He would give me the message and the words in which to express it, and so I said yes. I know that by myself I can do nothing, but “God hath chosen the weak things of the world, and things which are not . . .”

I have tried to tell them that the Christian life is the only happy one (*Eccles. viii. 12*). His thoughts to each one of us are “thoughts of peace” (*Jer. xxix. 11*). “The redeemed of the Lord shall come with singing and everlasting joy” (*Isa. li. 11*).

“ You have everything freely in Him ”—I should like to tell that to all the world. One rejoices most of all that life can be given us through the knowledge of Christ. I am a thousand times blessed to feel that I am led by Him, and that I can do something for Him.

The following are a few fragments of correspondence addressed to her little sister of twelve, for whom she always entertained a special tenderness, and over whom she had a very great influence :

August and September 1910.

You know that when you love anybody you always want to do something for them. What I can do for you is to pray for you, and on your part, if you love me, you can pray for me. I know you do it, and I want you to.

Would you like me to tell you something ? There is One who loves you, and Who is not content with praying for you, but because you need it, He has given Himself up even to death for you. He has loved you : now you must love Him and give yourself up to Him. Give yourself entirely to Him Who has given Himself for you, because you know that if you have need of the sacrifice of Jesus, He also has need of you ; He wants you to draw others to Him.

. . . What we must try to do is to know Jesus better and to let Him dwell in us. We cannot obey two masters at once. If we have asked Jesus to direct us, He will prevent evil from having dominion over us, and little by little, according as we are ready to receive Him, He will enter into our lives until He becomes Master of our whole being, and it will be our happiness and joy to obey Jesus only.

Is it not marvellous to think that Jesus wants to make use of us? You must not try to act by yourself, but you must simply open your heart wide, and let Jesus come in and take full possession, and He will act through you. If He is your King you can say that text, "The Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man can do unto me" (Heb. xiii. 6).

With Him we are strong, and we can stand being laughed at. No one can do you any harm, for it is He who takes care of you. Jesus loved us, and His boundless love was accompanied by boundless suffering. If we love Him we ought to suffer a little for Him, and we suffer so little in comparison.

One alone can help you, and that is the Almighty. He is always close to you, and when at a very difficult moment you pronounce His Name very softly in your heart, then you will get the victory.

[*To her Sister, Yvonne, at the time of her Examination.*]

SANDOWN, August 1910.

How I should have loved to have you with me on the sea yesterday! I pictured you plunged in the midst of dry Latin themes, and I longed for you to share all my enjoyment. . . . Your life of study and work is very beautiful. What a privilege it is to be able to learn so many things, and thus enlarge your mind. God needs intelligent servants full of knowledge and wisdom. I ask Him that you may become such a servant.

[*To her Father.*]

SANDOWN, August 17, 1910.

Many thanks for your good advice. I love to get it, and I try to follow it.

What strikes me here is to find so much liberty among the English, great independence, coupled with an entire disregard of "what people say." Everywhere, no matter for what object, you can hold an open-air meeting ; only two conditions are imposed, that you must not deny God nor speak against the King, hence every one says what he thinks, and is not ashamed to show his colours. This is a fine quality and the example is very good for me. . . .

Another striking thing is the association of games and sports with the serious side of the Christian life. I assure you our life here is nothing but joy and happiness. I am so busy that I can scarcely find time to write, so this morning I am glad to see the rain which enables me to do so. If it were fine I should now be in the water, swimming like a fish.

. . . My living abroad has stirred up my curiosity in new directions, and I want to see and know a little of the world. As you say, one must learn to observe, in order to judge of and appreciate things for oneself. I like your philosophic letters, there are so many domains of thought which I have hardly touched yet, and in which you will be able to guide me.

In September, Renée, invited by a friend, went to pay a charming visit to a large and happy family in Lincolnshire. With her usual eagerness she entered into all the English games and sports—hockey, tennis, golf, walks, and rides. She enjoyed the country life intensely. “The English are unique in the way they enjoy life,” she wrote.

Several visits to London, and the Christmas holidays spent with a friend’s family in Edinburgh, gave her the opportunity of seeing many things new to her.

It was at Hastings in a Christian family that Renée spent the winter, in order to learn English and have a term at a girls’ school. It was there that her soul, athirst for God, found an atmosphere favourable to its free development in contact with the love of God, and time to study His Word. It was there that she heard for the first time the call of God to the foreign mission field.

[*To her Mother.*]

HASTINGS, *October 10, 1910.*

To-day I should like to have a very quiet, loving talk with you. I fancy that you are here quite close to me, and that I am opening my heart to you.

You remember the text you gave me last year ? It keeps coming back to me continually. “Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.” Don’t you think that God chooses men and women to call them to some special service ? The world has such need of Jesus, and Jesus has need of witnesses.

I have felt lately that He is very near to me, I seem to have heard Him call me and I have answered "Yes," answered with all my heart, "Here am I, use me to draw souls to Thyself." Is it not God Himself Who puts into us these intense desires to serve Him, this great ambition for the advancement of His Kingdom? If it is He Who has created in us these desires, it is He Who will also realize them.

What, and where, will be the task which God has prepared for me? I am ready to go for Him wherever He wants me. At present I wish to be faithful in my daily task, I wish to keep at the feet of my Divine Master, and let Him teach me. We can only give to the world what we have received from Him.

Oh, to be able to spread around one that which gives life, the love of Christ! God will give us the power.

God is so good, He does so much for me, my heart is filled with boundless gratitude. The riches of His grace are for every one of us personally; they overwhelm us, and I feel most deeply that the Christian life is the only really happy and joyful one. The dark hours, and the sacrifices which one meets with on the way, are nothing compared with the deep peace which He gives.

I wish I could find words to express to you what He has become to me, my Saviour, my Confidant; He Who is always there, and Who desires to dwell

in me. He is *everything* to me, and I can say from the depth of my heart that He satisfies me. And you know that when one has found such a great treasure, the Pearl of great price, one has but one desire—to make it known to others.

[*To her Sister, Yvonne.*]

HASTINGS, October 23, 1910.

You are the first to whom I am confiding what God has been showing to me, what is passing between Him and me.

I believe that God is calling me to be a missionary. Since I have been in England God seems to be saying to me continually, "I have chosen thee to be My servant." Every time I hear people talk about missions it thrills me, but I don't want to choose my life for myself without hearing a distinct call from God. So I have been praying, praying much, that God would show me the plan He has arranged for my future. I am always thinking about it, and one Sunday morning while on the way to church I suddenly felt in myself that *that* was the purpose of God. But you know how easy it is to imagine anything that one particularly desires. While sitting in church during the service, it occurred to me that if God had really spoken to me, He would confirm the message now, through His minister, and what was the sermon but an appeal for missions! For the Mission to India.

Women missionaries are required to get access to the zenanas. I could tell you much that I heard about the poor little Hindoo widows. They are so miserable, one of them actually wrote to a missionary asking him to send her some medicine to kill her.

Oh, what suffering out there, and in the whole world ! If it pains us to hear about such things, how much Jesus must suffer, and how His loving heart must bleed to look upon these beings whom He loves, but who are living in darkness ! He needs us to make known His love. This is what was said by S. D. Gordon : " To-day, the hands of the pagans stretched out asking for the Gospel are more numerous than the hands of Christians to supply them with it."

[*To her Mother.*]

November 1910.

My letter for Yvonne is for you, too. Before sending it I wanted to be certain that the call was of God, and last evening I asked Him to give me the assurance that it was His will : " He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out ; and they follow Him, for they know His voice." What I asked of God very earnestly was that He would not let me take a false step. I know He will not let me post this letter if I am mistaken.

Last night, after asking Him to show me clearly His will, I fell asleep confiding in His promise.

I had not been asleep long when I dreamed that I saw a hand stretched out, beckoning me, apparently calling me. It was so real that I remember calling out, "Who is there?" I jumped out of bed, but, as soon as I lighted the candle, all had vanished. When the first feeling of fright was over I thought, or perhaps God put the thought into my mind, that the hand was one of the many hands that are stretched out to us, begging for the Gospel.

Oh, darling mother, it is such a grand thing to be chosen to carry abroad the story of Jesus! I feel quite unworthy, and by myself very incapable; but I know that Jesus does not ask us to work by ourselves, but only to let Him work through us.

Read my last letter to father; every one ought to know that my life is consecrated to God, and that when He calls me directly to a field of labour I shall respond joyfully, and proclaim His wonderful message to those who have never heard it.

[*To her Father.*]

November 1910.

I suppose that every person on emerging from childhood tries, on seeing life opening before her, to find the object to which she will devote herself, an object to which all her actions will tend, and which will be the inspiration of her life. I don't know whether everybody finds some such object, but I know that all who rejoice to bear the

name of Christian, have before them a grand and glorious object, and that is mine : to make Christ known, or, to put it better and more simply, to serve Him.

If it is to the work of foreign missions that God is calling me, will you give me to Him for this ?

[*To her Cousin.*]

HASTINGS, December 1, 1910.

Yes, I seem to hear a real call from God to the mission field. I have asked Him so earnestly to show me what are His plans for me. It seems hard to wait. I should have liked all the energy spent on playing hockey or golf to have been spent in my Master's service. But, little by little, I understand how much need God has to prepare His servants.

What really matters is to be ready to answer the call, and then to live very near to God, so as to understand the call clearly when it does come.

. . . How I long to be sure that God is leading me. Many questionings and moments of hesitation arise in my mind; sometimes moments of trouble and anguish attack me, a great "Why?" to which I can make no answer. At such times there is only one thing that I can do—listen to the voice of my King, open His Word, and then He who has taken care of me all my life long, He to whom you also belong, calms me, and fills me with the peace which passeth all understanding.

Oh, come also yourself and listen to His voice ! He will lead you to the work He has prepared for you, and remember that He has greater ambitions for you than you have for yourself.

[*To her Sister, Anne.*]

It is so good to get a glimpse of what my life is to be.

The object I have in view at present is to study sick-nursing, in prospect of missionary work.

I would like to begin to work at once, but I know that God has appointed the hour of His call. It may not be for many years, and I think of the thirty long years that Jesus lived, unknown, and unrecognized.

What a long and patient wait before the hour struck to begin God's work !

[*To her Mother.*]

December 10, 1910.

. . . How true it is that "the peace of God passeth all understanding !" My heart is full this morning. The vastness of the love of God passeth knowledge. How it must pain Him to see us troubled and worried about what He has in store for our future ! So long as we are ready to obey, all will be right. It is sometimes difficult to recognize His voice ; when it speaks it is impossible to mistake it ; but we are not always near enough to Him to hear it.

HASTINGS, February 1911.

It is strange to meet sometimes with Christians who are melancholy and depressed. I know that sometimes God sends trial to educate His children, and allows them to pass through suffering, but nothing ought to take from us the deep peace of Christ and the joy of His pardon.

I must learn to live in His presence, to experience it at all times, and not only when I am kneeling down.

Oh, how sin and indifference still estrange my heart from God ! But Christ takes me into His school, and by His love and patience He teaches me to rejoice in His presence, and gives me the victory over myself.

Thank you, darling mother, for all you have done for me. I feel that I owe so much to your love and your prayers. It is you who have set before me the only object to which my life should be directed —to glorify God. It is so sweet to feel that we are united in the same ideal.

March 1911.

The ways of God are the ways of Nature. I mean to say that He acts in us in the same way that He acts in Nature—slowly but surely.

I think that for our conversion it requires a decisive act which throws us into the arms of God ; once there we go on step by step, led by God. What we want is more trust ; God will finish the

work He has begun, notwithstanding the delays occasioned by ourselves.

Referring to the same subject, we quote the fragment of a letter addressed to her sister, shortly after her return from England.

CRANS, July 29, 1911.

. . . We are in the hands of One who is stronger than Satan, and stronger than ourselves. I have to fight against sin, but God conquers for me.

When I think of the transformation He has worked in me with regard to my shyness, I never ought to doubt ; I cannot now, for He has wrought so wonderfully.

[*Later on, to her Sister.*]

. . . God delivers us, but Satan is always ready to trip us up ; he attacks us unawares, and if we neglect our communion with God, we succumb.

. . . It is an immense joy to know that there is no longer any barrier between God and ourselves. The sin which separated us has been vanquished by Christ ; “ knowing that our old man has been crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin ” (Rom. vi. 6).

How beautiful is all this, full of mystery, but full of reality too. Trust is above all. He is mighty ; and He loves us. Watch and pray. Victory, God has promised us, and it is ours.

[*Later on still, to a Friend.*]

. . . You tell me that conflicts, agony, sufferings, temptations of all sorts sometimes hide Christ from your soul. Darling, we must at all costs get the victory over sin. Nothing ought, nor can, hide the face of Christ, except the evil to which we yield.

In my own life I have passed through times of conflict against sin. I was conscious of evil. I saw it in myself ; I wished to do right, and I was enslaved by sin. Perhaps you have passed that way, and you know the moments of anguish when you were overcome by an enemy stronger than yourself. But never let us forget that Christ has conquered. It was for sin that He died ; He has freed us from sin.

Therefore, take courage !

The Apostle Paul had experience of the sin which pushes us the way we do not wish to go, but he laid hold of the deliverance which is in Jesus Christ ; and he was able to cry, “ In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us.”

When we have experienced the victory over sin in our own hearts, then we can speak to the world with assurance of the power of Christ.

CHAPTER III

THE "BON SECOURS,"¹ 1911-1914 STUDY IN HOSPITAL WORK AND SICK-NURSING

ON her return from England, Renée kept secretly in her heart the calls she had received to missionary work. She had always wished to study sick-nursing. This study she looked upon as a useful preparation for her future work as a missionary. She was well qualified for this vocation. The strong devotion of her character, her desire to make her life a useful one, were destined to find in it a vast field of activity. "It will be a great privilege," she wrote, "if in bringing comfort to people's bodies, God should use me to comfort their souls."

[*To her Mother, shortly after entering the "Bon Secours."*]]

I wish I had a heart big enough to love these poor human beings as God loves them ; I wish they understood that it is from love that I have come

¹ The "Bon Secours" is a private school and institute for nurses at Geneva, where professional instruction is given to girls of the upper classes, either to prepare them for philanthropic work or to enable them to practise as sick-nurses.

to take care of them, and that if I love them it is because there is One above Who loves them and has done so much for them.

[*To a Cousin.*]

September 18, 1911.

. . . I see more and more the power of the love that one sheds around one. I like so much that Biblical expression which calls it "the bond of perfectness" or "a more excellent way." I am getting attached to my work, and I offer it up to God. He can make a little of His own Love to shine through His servants.

During her course at Bel-Air, in the Hospital for the Insane.

It is the saddest thing of all to see the life of the mind, the heart, and the soul extinguished before that of the body ; it is so strange and incomprehensible. Yesterday evening I was feeling very troubled, but you know that special strength will be given me, and this morning I read that beautiful passage : "His hands have been strengthened by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob."

HOSPITAL, *Winter, 1911.*

I have in my ward some interesting patients to whom I am quite attached. The faith of one is most touching ; the doctors have tried everything for her without success. "Only God can do any-

thing," she said to me. " He is all-powerful and He is infinitely kind." I pray for her, and I wish God would work a miracle.

I wonder why Christians realize so little in their lives of the power which Christ bestowed on His disciples. Have we the right to ask for miracles ? If we have, are our lives sufficiently stripped of ourselves for God to answer us ? I think we ought to imitate more than we do the lives of Christ and His disciples, and live a simple life, stripped of all those worldly goods to which we are so much attached : Go ye . . . preach . . . heal . . . raise the dead . . . cleanse . . . freely ye have received, freely give. Take neither gold nor silver nor brass in your purses, neither two coats nor shoes nor staff.

How can one realize such a life in the midst of so much wealth ? By entirely detaching our hearts from these good things as if we did not possess them, but are responsible for our stewardship of them.

[*To her Sister.*]

I have just said to you " Courage ! " One must learn to forget oneself ; that is the best way to be happy. In sacrificing one's life, one imagines that one loses it, but one finds it again—doubled ; a greater power is working in us. You see, I have such peace because my life is in His hands. I have no longer any personal ambition or desire. . . .

I want to be a strong soul upon whom God can rely. I should like, in obeying His commands, to

become a friend of God, so that He could reveal to me His purposes, and allow me to be a fellow-labourer with Him.

[*From a Private Notebook.*]

March 22, 1912.

We have been sanctified by the blood of Christ. That is an accomplished fact. But the transition from the old life to the new life of holiness is as from winter to spring ; yesterday was the first day of spring. Everybody knows and believes it, notwithstanding the rain and the return of cold weather. The winter does not go away all at once, it gives way little by little to the finer and warmer days. It has interruptions, steps backward to the earlier weather, till one thinks summer is never coming. For all that, one knows perfectly well that spring is really here, and that it will develop in due time.

As to us Christians, we have the absolute conviction that the sacrifice of Christ is accomplished, and that it has purchased our sanctification. In due time it will be manifested in our outer life, and, according to the laws of God, it will shine out like the summer which follows the spring. The development of the Divine life in us is like the natural growth in the vegetable world. We do not need to make any special effort, only place ourselves under the conditions favourable to such growth.

[*To her Friend, E. R.*]

July 1912.

It is so sweet to be able to leave everything in His hands. Every day I am conscious that He leads His children by ways that are sometimes painful, and such as we should certainly not have chosen, but which are the best for leading us to know Him. The knowledge of God is the one thing needful, and we have yet a long way to go to search it out and possess it more thoroughly.

Every day Christ becomes to me more and more the One only reality that exists ; with Him, life is transformed, and so many possibilities open up before us. We have great ambitions for our lives, but He has still greater ones for us ; He knows so well our capabilities ; if we leave everything to Him, He will know how to develop them and open before us the path by which our lives may become the richest of blessings to others.

[*To a Cousin.*]

November 7.

I know that a life entirely yielded to Christ may become extraordinarily rich and powerful. God has given me experiences which have proved to me His power and the transformations He is able to effect.

[*To her Friend, E. R.*]

Before undertaking any fresh external activity, one must have an interior preparation. There must

be a complete negation of "I," which takes so long to kill.

In this battle we must fight solely by faith ; we think that we can overcome ourselves by our own strength, but that means only a deeper fall.

Christ has conquered for us

and offers us that sanctification which we have only to receive from Him.

The one who will soonest arrive at this end is the one who knows best how to receive quite simply the immeasurable gifts of God.

I have begun another course at Bel-Air, and I am pleased to find there the little nurse with whom I used to work before. I feel a great responsibility towards her, for I find that she looks upon me as a sort of model. She said to me the other day, "I was just going to be angry, but what stopped me was that I felt that you were close by me in the next ward." She reads her Bible regularly, and when I told her that every morning I wrote in my memorandum book one "verse,"—one of the "marvels" of the Word of God—to impress it more strongly on my memory, she replied, "Everything that I read is so new to me that I have no need to write it down to make me remember it."

CRANS, June 1913.

My heart is overflowing with gratitude and joy, I have so many treasures ; I like to count them



[Facing page 32.]

one by one. The most precious of all to me is the treasure of the Gospel, it is that deep, unshakable peace which dwells in the depth of my heart.

May my whole life be one of thanksgiving to Him Who has given it to me.

[*From a Notebook.*]

After leaving the "Bon Secours."

One stage of my life has just closed. I pray Thee to show me the path which I ought to tread.

The Path.—It is Thyself, my Saviour; may I never let go Thy hand.

Never may I withdraw my eyes from Thine. I am Thine. Thou art mine.

What infinite happiness !

At the completion of her studies in July 1913, there was no lack of work for Renée. The directorate of the dispensary, the care of the sick in the town, the maternity work, and then the organization of a Convalescent Home at Crans, occupied her during the summer of 1914.

It was at the "Bon Secours" that Renée met with her bosom friend, Mlle. Genia Menni. A strong attachment grew up between these sister souls, both deeply sympathetic towards all human suffering. Renée needed to confide in a heart which thoroughly understood her; she was, above all, a personality which responded to love and affectionate interest. Their work together later on among the wounded, and the correspondence carried on between them, continually strengthened their friendship, which never knew the shadow of a cloud.

Most of the following letters were addressed to this friend.

July 1913.

I feel troubled about the comfort I am living in compared with the destitution of others. I have always a great longing to understand for myself (for each person it is different) the true, the right way of living : what I ought to do to share with others all that I possess and all my privileges.

[*From a Notebook.*]

Put in my heart, O Lord, something of Thine infinite compassion for the poor.

Enable me to share with them their lives and sufferings.

LE RIED, *August 3, 1913.*

Do you know that when reading *Saint Francis*, I regret that I did not live in his days. I should certainly have joined St. Claire. What wonderful communion she had with her God, and in consequence how great was her work ! In real poverty, and having severed every worldly tie, it seems as if this communion would be more complete. How beautiful it must be to live only for God, and consecrate everything to Him !

LE RIED, *August 24, 1913.*

If I open my heart to you, it is not to expose it to view and thus diminish the blessing of God. It

is to your inmost soul that I speak, because we understand each other so thoroughly, and that our mutual experiences help us onward.

You know that I have received, in Christ, the pardon of my sins, but still I sometimes fight in my own strength, and then I am overcome. But this life of conflicts and defeats is not God's purpose for His children. He wishes to make them always victorious, and He has shown me that to attain to this I must cease to fight for myself and let Him have entire possession of my heart. I have already given myself to Him, but perhaps never thoroughly enough.

God has shown me also that my affection for you must not hinder my spiritual life, and I have given to Him this affection that He may sanctify it. It is He alone who has the greatest and the first place in my heart and in my life.

Since this act of surrender the conflict against a fault, which used to give me continual trouble, has ceased. He is a great conqueror! Also the anxious thoughts about whether I were living in the right way, my plans for the future—all that also is no more. Yes. He is there Who orders everything, even to the most minute details. I no longer say "I will do this or that in Thy service," but "What shall I do to serve Thee?" And without seeing my way beforehand, I know that He will prepare a way before me which I have only to follow. All my desire is to remain faithfully in

communion with Him, and to understand His Will always. . . .

It is so good to read the Word of God when He explains it Himself! The other day I was reading the Story of the Prodigal Son, far away from his father, dying of hunger and begging for husks to satisfy it. This is how the human soul hungers which is apart from God. It may exist for a certain time on the imperfect love of men ; but if this fails, it dies of hunger. It is nothing but the perfect love of the Father that can save and satisfy.

How I wish that this perfect love should be known by so many souls that are dying of hunger, and how I long to be able to reveal to them what I know of it ! I speak like this to you because my heart is full to overflowing.

I must tell you what happened one night. I woke up hearing some one say, " Turn round, Renée, and look behind you ! See how beautiful the road is on which we are walking." I thought it was Dora who had spoken, but she was fast asleep.

After looking out of the open window and admiring the moon and the starry sky, I lay down again, thinking that the way of faith in which I want to walk was the only true and beautiful one upon earth.

[*To her Friend, E. R.*]

October 1913.

How nice it is to find from time to time on one's way those halting-places where one has time for

reflection, and where one can consider eternal questions which are the only things of real importance. I must tell you something that I have lately realized : it is that Christ has provided for us grand and glorious things that for the most part we know nothing about, or if we know them theoretically we do not act upon them in our lives. We struggle long with the sin within us, and try to conquer it by ourselves ; we try to improve our nature, whilst we ought to allow Christ to destroy that nature and replace it with His own.

. . . As to myself, that is my aim—to become like Him. Do you think anything can be more beautiful ?

[*To a Friend.*]

I seem to have made a great step in advance. I have given myself completely to God, and in exchange He has given Himself to me.

What love is that of our Father, who wishes to form within us the perfect image of Christ, “Who is not ashamed to call us brethren”?

I have a new vision of what my life ought to be. My ambition to *serve* God ought not to have the first place in it ; rather, above all, I ought to seek to resemble our Great Example.

“ To be made like unto Him.”

During a stay at the Maternity Hospital, October 1913 :

I am hungry and thirsty for Christ. All else fades before Him, and I don't want to get attached to any other object besides this excellent and perfect Good. I understand as well what the Apostle Paul meant when he said, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things." But you know that what one renounces with the greatest reluctance is the "I" which will not die. But Christ has overcome, He will be more than conqueror, and so shall I.

During the month of November, 1913, Renée was superintendent of a dispensary at Geneva. It was not without hesitation that she accepted this responsibility.

. . . I have received a letter asking me to undertake the charge of a dispensary. I feel quite unfitted for such a task, the doctors frighten me, and I am not the stuff of which to make a matron.

BON SECOURS, *November 4, 1913.*

On resuming the work here, one is again in the presence of suffering and misery. Oh, how great they are! When I see them at close quarters something sticks in my throat, and the thought of so many beings plunged into distress, because they know not God, always torments me. I said so this summer to a man who, though quite simple and illiterate, is a saint through and through. He

replied to me something like this: "What God demands of you is that you keep near to Him. The good seed falls into the ground, and brings forth some thirty, some sixty, some an hundred-fold." It is a beautiful thought that a life lived in God, by a law similar to that of Nature, reproduces other lives like itself.

It is a good thing to feel very weak and helpless in view of the miseries that need our help, because then one puts everything into the hands of God, Who is always able to act.

I am more and more persuaded that God responds to the trust we place in Him, and to the requests we make to Him for others.

November 10, 1913.

I know that I am too little, too vile, too imperfect, to comprehend the love of God which passeth knowledge, but I have accepted it, and from the depth of my heart I pray that prayer in *The Imitation*, "Draw me to Thyself by a bond of indissoluble love, for Thou alone canst satisfy those who love Thee, and without Thee everything else is nothing."

December 1913.

I have lately seen a poor man who is attacked by a terrible cancer in the head; half of his face is eaten away—it is a horrible wound. I have never met with more wonderful patience in a sick person, never a murmur, but perfect peace.

For a man in the prime of life to be attacked by an incurable disease, which goes on unceasingly devouring him . . . it means wonderful submission and sweetness never to utter an impatient word, a reproach, or a complaint.

Now he is no more; quietly he passed away. There are lives like that, beautiful, but hidden, ones that one never knows about. He was a hero of suffering.

At Christmas time, 1912-13, Renée invited to the *salon* of her parents at Grand Mézel a number of poor and infirm patients. Many of the nurses from the Bon Secours also joined in this little fête. We find in her private notebook the following prayer:

Evening, December 24, 1913.

The prayer that I address to Thee, O God, and Thou knowest how I long for Thee to hear it, is that Thou wouldst reveal Thyself in all Thy power and might, to the souls of those who are coming here. I feel impelled to pray for several among them; listen to my prayers, my sighs, and my petitions, and wilt Thou, O Christ, also intercede for them?

[*To her Friend, E. R., a few days afterwards.*]

We have had a delightful Christmas treat for our sick people. There were twenty children and a dozen women. Mother spoke a few words to them which gave them courage and peace.

[*From a Notebook.*]

Midnight, December 31, 1913.

I feel very happy in reviewing the past year.

This Divine joy flows from having known more of Christ, from having had the experience of His *delivering power*, from being fully persuaded that He wishes to give me the *life of victory* over myself, the life of holiness, and of communion with God.

What I ask of Him for this new year is that He may give me a burning thirst to know Him, and to possess Him. May He teach me to accept that which He offers me.

"To him that is athirst *I will give* of the Fountain of the water of life *freely.*" "Let him that is athirst *come.*" I thank Thee that I may always come to Thee.

The following letter, written to Mlle. Menni on returning from a visit to her at Samaden, shows that in spite of her outward activity, Renée did not neglect family duties.

GENEVA, *February 1914.*

On my arrival I found a letter from Sister Rose-Marie asking me to go to work at the Maternity Home, but my duty is clearly at home just now.

I was very pleased when mother said on starting this morning for Paris, "I am leaving without the slightest anxiety." Inès calls me her little mother, and it is she, principally, that I have to look after.

. . . Never mind what the work is, the important thing is to be in communion with God.

. . . Inès has just had in all her little friends ; they enjoyed themselves very much ; they are now gone, and it is peace after a grand hullabaloo. . . . In watching the children it is very easy to observe that characteristic trait of human nature, selfishness. In children it is candid ; it does not seek to dissimulate nor to present itself in a respectable guise.

What a contrast between these happy children and those of poor Mrs. M., whom I am nursing now ! What sorrow and bitterness there must be in those little hearts ! A sick mother, irritable, grumbling, scolding the eldest, a girl of thirteen, who can never do enough work for her. There is nothing but quarrelling and tears from morning till night. One feels helpless, but God can touch their hearts. When we have a difficult problem before us, we must lift up our hearts to Him and His strength will come upon us.

Sunday.

I have had a very happy day. Perhaps I owe it to a longer time of meditation than usual this morning. I have been thinking of the last prayer of Jesus for His disciples. I have never before felt so vividly His boundless love for His own. Second only to the glory of the Father, He is occupied with them ; and in His petitions there is a note of

such tenderness and love. "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am." Such words are those of a true Friend; how well He knew the wants of our hearts! This morning I tasted a little of such friendship.

February 16, 1914.

. . . I am making no plans; my great desire is to live a life devoted entirely to those who have need of love, but who have been defrauded of it; but I remember that thought of Kingsley's: "It is our pride rather than our heroism which cries 'Give me mountains to remove!' As for sweeping away the dust . . . !" Be faithful. God will give us more work according to His own good pleasure.

February 18.

. . . I have been for a walk by myself this morning. My mind was occupied with serious questions.

How can one practically live the Christ life? In order to follow Him is it not necessary to be, like Him, free from everything that the world gives, to possess nothing, but depend upon God alone? I laid before Him this desire, to live as He lived.

I opened my little book of Psalms, and God spoke to me. He replied by magnificent promises, and I returned repeating the words that He had just given me.

March 2, 1914.

I feel so distinctly that God is leading me, and in each detail of the day I recognize His hand and His love. He speaks so clearly when one is ready to listen. . . . Each day has a fresh command and a fresh promise.

March.

Give my love to your dear mountains ; how lovely it used to be up there in the grand solitude, far from men and nearer to God !

. . . This morning I have been to a new patient ; a case of Pott's disease with paralysis of the limbs. She is entirely helpless and suffered much during two months passed in the Hospital ; they were too busy to look after her. . . . Nobody gave her anything to drink, and her oranges rotted in her locker. . . . She is very brave, and it is a great pleasure to me to be able to be about her and give her the care of which she has been deprived. I made her some cushions of different sizes, and when I had arranged them she said : " Now I am so comfortable, I feel like a queen." She asked me to sing her a hymn and with her feeble voice she tried to join in the chorus.

. . . Do you think that it is really impossible to equalize the good things of this life ? It is so bad to see on the one hand so much money squandered, and on the other such great need. When I think of the trouble and hard work of one woman who

earns 2s. 2d. a day and who has to support her two children and an old grandmother ; and when after visiting these homes where everything is lacking I return to such comfortable quarters, my heart smites me and I long to take their place and give them mine.

. . . Read the eighth chapter of the fourth book of *The Imitation of Christ* ; it is admirable. " All that you give Me outside of yourself is nothing, because it is you that I want, not your gifts." And further on, it is so true : " Perfect joy dwells in the perfect gift."

March.

I have a grand plan for this summer. I want to hire a small house at Crans, and have our town patients there one by one for rest and convalescence. My parents have considered the matter, and are not averse to it. If this project is of God, He will provide what is needed.

March 30.

The house at Crans, the " Petit Clos," is to let with its pretty garden. It will be a real paradise to the patients. I hope to have as an assistant one of the nurses from Bel-Air with whom I have worked. We were attached to one another, and after I left Bel-Air we have corresponded and talked to each other intimately and seriously. She has told me since, that she was inclined to laugh at me when she received my first letter, but then she thought

over it and she wanted, as I had advised her, to read the Bible to find what her soul *needed*. As she had no Bible she prayed to God to make me understand about it and send her one, and He did it. Though knowing nothing about it, I had already bought one and sent it to her. "Even before I opened the parcel," she told me, "I was sure it was a Bible."

Since that time a great change has come over her.

SIERRE, *April 1914.*

Here I am surrounded with Nature, forgetting for the moment my work, the suffering and sorrows of others, and seeking in the presence of God, strength and love, something of His Divine love which teaches us how to understand, to help, and to comfort. It is unspeakably sad to see His love rejected and misunderstood. One would like to hear a voice raised, strong as the voice of a prophet, to cry out to the world against its insane folly.

GENEVA, *May 30, 1914.*

My tuberculous patient is dead. I was with him for an hour during his long agony; there was something so touching, so impressive about that dying man, sometimes restless, sometimes calm. His eyes seemed to be fixed on something that we could not see, which brought a smile to his face. He recognized his wife, his brother, and others. The agony of the parting is very bitter; I don't

understand how those who are not believers can endure it at all.

CRANS, June 1, 1914.

You would have laughed heartily if you had been here yesterday afternoon in the courtyard of Crans, to help in the removal of the furniture to the "Petit Clos." Everybody wanted to help, and very soon brought down, out of the loft, bedsteads, hair mattresses, wool mattresses, arm-chairs, down quilts, counterpanes; articles of every kind were piled up on a cart, the donkey was hitched on, and then "Forward!" Happily the distance between the two houses is not long, for the pace at which we went would not have taken us far. Everything was soon in place, and there are only a few things to buy, to have all ready by Tuesday, which is to be the great day of arrival. Péliissier will bring Mme. S. in a boat; she has not been out of her kitchen for twelve years. Nielder will bring little R., whose legs are both helpless, and I shall fetch Mme. J. in a wheel chair. I have received a nice sum of money, which removes most of my financial responsibility. It is quite touching to see the interest all the village people take in these poor invalids.

Mother and Dora go to England in July; as for myself, I must give up all idea of travelling. I am a fixture at Crans, but if you are free, come to us here, it will do you good.

June 4, 1914.

I want to tell you all my good news. Tuesday was a beautiful day, and I assure you it will remain engraven in more than one heart. There is no greater pleasure than to be able to make others happy, and to bring a little joy into the lives of those who have none.

The grand journey from Geneva to Crans was quite a success. Everybody enjoyed it. You should have seen the astonishment of little R., a sweet little girl of six, who is suffering from infantile paralysis, when she saw the Lake for the first time in her life. She screamed with delight at the fields, the flowers, and the cows. She had never been outside the door except to go to the doctor. The other patients, as soon as they arrived at the "Petit Clos," sat down on the bench outside the door and wouldn't move. Mme. S. could hardly make up her mind to go up to her room, for it is twelve years since she last breathed the fresh open air.

July 12.

I wish you could have been here when the children were first taken to the farm. Till then, little R. never knew of the existence of so many animals. Each one seemed to be more interesting than another ; she wanted to touch and fondle them all ; she had no fear ; on the contrary, she stretched out her little hand and wanted to kiss them ; she was delighted when a young colt, that she had been

petting, actually kissed her by licking her hand. If she had had her way, she would have taken hens, chickens, cats, and rabbits away in her perambulator.

Yesterday we had a grand expedition into the wood. It was not very easy to get along, pushing the invalid chairs over paths full of stones and ruts ; but we got there all right, and it was lovely under the trees.

This is my daily time-table : At 7 a.m. I am at the "Petit Clos," and I begin by attending to the little servant, who needs some massage ; then I get up Mme. J. and the little R. ; they breakfast all together at 8 a.m. Next, I go home to breakfast and say good morning to my own people. I return at 8.30 for prayers. We sing, and read a Scripture portion. Then everybody goes about her work ; the patients who are well enough do their rooms. I get the others up and begin treatment, massage, dressing sores, poulticing, etc.

Whenever some little difficulties arise I bring them all to God, and He straightens them out. I am nothing but His little servant, who tries to obey Him, and who ought to say, "I am an unprofitable servant ; I have done that which was my duty to do."

There is an immense deal to do at the "Petit Clos." I am busy from seven to twelve without stopping, with four patients who can do nothing without help. It makes a lot of work, and I am alone but for a charwoman who does the cooking ;

our own little maid has been taken ill. I am hoping to get some one to help in the work which I have to do myself, as well as the care of the patients. But though it does mean a little trouble and fatigue, there is also much joy, and God knows what I need, and He takes care of us.

July 3, 1914.

It is good to feel one is in God's school, that He undertakes our education, and that this education is to bring us to a perfect resemblance of Himself. . . . The house is now full, eleven patients, one of them is completely bedridden and can do nothing for herself ; but she is a delightful patient, so happy to be here. She was so afraid that she would not be able to come, she said, "I should like to stick to Mlle. van Berchem ; do let her take me." We brought her from the Hospital in the motor. We have three new children who are very wan and ill. I have a big task on hand, I feel it more and more every day and I am rather lonely ; father and the children have gone for a trip in the motor. Mother and Dora go to England on July 16, but I look above, and I ask for all I need from my Divine Master.

In conclusion let me quote two passages, the first from Maeterlinck : "There is not a being in the world who does not do some good to his own soul, when he loves some other being." The second from *The Imitation*, which I try to realize : "Be sure that it is your duty to live a dying life. The more one dies to self, the more one lives to God."

C H A P T E R I V

THE WAR, 1914-1915

ON the declaration of war, Renée was well prepared for the task which awaited her. Her one desire was to make herself useful wherever help was most needed. On August 19 she wrote to her father at the frontier :

There is a feeling of impatience regarding the great engagements likely soon to take place. One cannot but be heartbroken to think of all the suffering and loss of life.

With regard to the "Petit Clos," we have decided to close it at the end of the month.

I want to explain to you the situation, and hear what you think about it. There does not seem much chance of fighting in Switzerland, so the "Bon Secours" will not be of much use here. If the wounded foreigners are brought to Swiss Hospitals the Red Cross will look after them; there are plenty of helpers at their disposal. So I am wondering whether I should not be of most use in France, or with your permission, in Belgium, where the distress must be the greatest, and the nurses the fewest.

It was at the summons of a friend belonging to the "Bon Secours" that Renée, after a short stay at Annecy, took up work at Lyons, in the Hospital installed at the Lyon-Vaize Railway Station, where she remained two months.

[*To her Friend at Nevers.*]

GARE DE LYON-VAIZE, September 17, 1914.

It is heart-breaking to see what we see, and hear the accounts of those returning from the battle-field. What suffering, what atrocities! How can human nature fall so low? Our work consists of meeting the trains of the wounded, to change the dressings, and to receive temporarily such cases as are too badly wounded to go on.

We are six sisters working in pairs, relieving one another, for some of us must be there by day and night.

[*To her Father at the Frontier.*]

September.

All my work and all that I see here reminds me continually of you. Every day I feel more and more thankful that our Switzerland has been spared.

It would interest you to hear the stories of those arriving from the front. I wish you could be there at the arrival of a train of wounded. We have plenty of work. The other night four trains arrived, one of which contained 1100 wounded.

We often have to deal with dressings which have been on several days, and have become septic. Then many wounded who come straight from the battlefield have only the first-aid dressings on, and sometimes these have not been properly fixed, so that the cotton-wool sticks to the wound ; it takes a lot of trouble to detach them.

[*From a Notebook.*]

LYONS, September 19, 1914.

A morning of heavy work at the Station Infirmary. Is it the praise of men I seek, or that of God ? "Do I seek to please men ?" Teach me, O Christ, to live with but one object in view ; may it be my one anxiety and my only joy *to please Thee.*

[*To her Mother.*]

October 1, 1914.

A train arrived just now and brought us plenty of work. I attended to an infantry soldier wounded in the arm and the hip. He had fallen into a hole and lay there four nights and three days without food. I am surprised to see what a large proportion of wounds heal. In a Hospital of 350 beds one of the head doctors told us about 90 per cent. would be fit to return to the front in one or two months. It is true that we do not have the very worst cases here.

The German prisoners are much to be pitied ; they are so down-hearted, and sometimes so badly wounded that it seems as if nothing mattered to them, and they do not care what happens. What suffering, sorrow, and misery ! Everybody is stricken, and everybody suffers.

I love to think of our delightful Crans, where everything is calm and peaceful ; but it is so good to carry with one the peace of God, to be of those who trust in the Lord, and are as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved.

[*From a Notebook.*]

Night duty ; very busy getting ready swabs against the arrival of a Hospital train at half-past twelve. All of them stretcher cases, and very badly wounded. Amputation of legs, arms, and in one case both hands. An officer of the Flying Corps, with both legs broken ; he fell 150 metres. One feels an intense sadness at the sight of these young men, fathers of families, mutilated for life. At twenty-three to have both legs cut off !

Great excitement at the dressing-station. A very bad haemorrhage keeps us all in suspense. The tourniquet checks it ; then caffeine injection, camphorated oil, injection of serum, patient very agitated and nervous. The priest is sent for, and we withdraw. It is touching to see the very young priest kneeling tenderly beside the stretcher.

After cleaning up the dressing-station, I go out on to the platform and am stopped by a Luxemburger who asks if I can do anything for his children. They have been travelling for several days without getting much on the route ; they were father, mother, mother-in-law, and six children.

It was two o'clock in the morning, and their train did not start for five hours. We took them to the Hospital kitchen and gave them milk, chocolate, and bread. The youngest, a baby of three weeks old, engaged all our attention—we performed a complete toilet for him. After the emigrants were gone we lay down a little while and slept heavily. At half-past six we had a rude awakening, and found ourselves confronted with an Arab whose wounds had to be dressed before the train left. He was accompanied by a very nice officer, who thanked us warmly. A trainload of wounded is in the station ; those who can walk are coming to have their dressings changed. On the platform there is a very young soldier who has had a bullet through his cheek, and he can't talk ; he is washing his face. All at once he stops, his face brightens, he begins to run, for he has caught sight of his brother, also wounded . . . they embrace one another and enter the dressing-station together, and want to sit side by side while we attend to them. Both were in the firing-line, but without news of one another, till on the platform of the railway station they met !

[*To her Friend.*]

CRANS, October 18.

You will be surprised to see that I am writing from Crans. I have been able to escape for two days, and I hastened home to see father, who left here on August 3, and has a few days' leave. It does one good to be once more with one's own people. The country is magnificent ; but one can't enjoy it as in other years, for every one seems to have a heavy weight upon the heart, and to hear continually the cries of suffering that are going up from the world.

After a short visit to England, to be present at the marriage of her eldest sister, Renée rejoined her friend, Mlle. Menni, at Nevers, where they worked together in a Military Hospital until January 1916.

There is a great mixture among the soldiers. I have, lying side by side, an acrobat, a Parisian hair-dresser, a schoolmaster, a rag-picker, a commercial traveller, and a peasant from Savoy. It is often very fascinating to listen to their conversation. Some of them give excellent accounts of the fighting, and all in the same breath tell you of the dangers they passed through, and their own brilliant achievements.

[*To her Mother.*]

NEVERS, December 3, 1914.

To-day I want to open my heart to you, and let you read it down to its depths. Darling mother,

I know you understand me better than anybody, and that you have perhaps guessed and understood, before I have, all that I am realizing now. This is what I feel so strongly, and which has been so clear to me for several days past : it is that there is work, greater, more beautiful, more useful than that I have been doing these three years. The soul is worth much more than the body, and when I look around I see so many people engaged on caring for the body, and so few who take the trouble to understand the soul and learn how to care for it. My great desire is that God should call me to that work. I wish *that* to be my sole object, and that all my efforts should tend towards it. But when I look at my own work I can see that I am far from it. I want God to make me an "able minister" of the Gospel. Do you think He will open a way for me to work directly in His service and to bring souls to Him ? It seems that now one is in such close touch with suffering and death one ought to have many opportunities for this great work. I should like to throw myself into it ; but I don't seem to possess the weapons necessary for the conflict. . . . How good it is to have you for a confidant ! Tell me all you think. I don't need to ask for your prayers, for I feel that they surround me continually. I believe that for the moment I am where God wants me, and that if I don't know how to speak to those around me of His great love I can pray for them, and God will reveal Himself to them.

[*To her Sister, Yvonne.*]

HOSPITAL AT NEVERS, December 30, 1914.

. . . I am beginning my night duty. Picture to yourself an old building, formerly a college. On the ground floor a number of little rooms all opening into the courtyard ; it is in one of these that I am sitting now. Five beds are all it will hold. All round the walls are pigeon-holes, for it is a classroom. The desks serve for tables ; all the lights are out except one little candle on the corner of the table where I am writing. The case that I am watching is a strong, handsome soldier ; but he is now a pitiable spectacle, for they have just taken a great splinter of a shell out of the bones of the wrist. It was a dangerous operation, and it has produced a serious haemorrhage from the wounds. It is frightening to see the blood flowing in thick streams without being able to do much to stop it. It has soaked through the mattress, so you can understand how weak and pale he is. This evening the doctor considers it a hopeless case ; but as long as there is breath there is hope.

January 18, 1915.

The wounded man I told you about is getting better and better ; he is just like a great baby, and is always asking for attention.

[*To her Mother.*]

January 1915.

Our Hospital has been set apart to receive from the different dépôts those soldiers who have bullets

or bits of shrapnel to be extracted. Mlle. Menni and I have charge of the operating theatre in addition to our work in the wards. We have just received thirty-five soldiers from one dépôt, and eighty are announced to be coming from another, and so on. You see we have plenty of work, and many more operations to come. A very clever surgeon from Paris is coming to perform them. It is very interesting and, as in this Hospital of 200 beds we two are the only certified nurses, all the responsibility rests upon us. We feel we are useful, and less than ever do I regret my years of training. . . . Yesterday we were at operations again, and we never got through so much before—nine operations in the day. We were on duty from seven in the morning till half-past seven in the evening, with only one hour and a half off in the middle of the day. . . . In the evening we were well pleased with the work done, and the good results we have had for some time.

[*After a Night on Duty.*]

One must die to self . . . more and more I see that the experience is a necessity. There are things which must be abandoned, and again others after that. Some one has said : “ It is time to die our complete death, so as to live our complete life.” ¹ Yes, indeed, it is time ! God help us ! . . . My desire is as strong as ever to work in a direct manner

¹ Gaston Frommel.

to win souls to Christ. One must be endued with the Holy Spirit. I want the true baptism ; I wish to possess the power to love and win souls. My life is entirely in His hands. May He do with me what He sees best !

[*To her Sister, Odette.*]

NEVERS, January 5, 1915.

May this year bring to you not only outward happiness, but the true joy and peace which are still deeper. May your desire to possess Christ be realized, and may He fill your life. He wants you, darling ; He wants to dwell in you ; it is His wish, and I know it is yours also. "I will guide thee," He says. Life is an untried path ; we pass along it like a traveller who has undertaken a long journey ; it is not good to walk alone without knowing the way. One needs a guide ; God offers Himself to us for that. How good to be guided by Him ! The road may be rough, darkness may overtake us, and the storm break over us ; but if He is in front of us opening the way we need fear nothing. How good it is to have found such a Guide at the beginning of your journey ! . . . We both have the same end in view : we want to run straight on and not be turned aside by the occupations, the labours, the affections of life, or any other obstacles which might hinder our progress.

Sometimes for a moment I long so much to be with you all ; then I pull myself up and think of

all the suffering here, and all the wounded, lonely ones who need somebody to take trouble over them and really love them. . . . Although I do so long to be among you, yet I should be sorry to quit my post. You know how one gets attached! . . .

[*To her Friend.*]

GENEVA, April 1915.

Here I am at home once more among my dear ones. They all met me at the station. It is so lovely to see them again. . . . I am confined to the house with a horrid toothache. I have suffered acutely, but once again I see that God orders all things. I was already tired when I returned to Nevers; it needed this little check to teach me that I needed a real rest. I am going to pass the weekend quietly in the house. I am often alone, and I have time to think about those I love, and, like Mary, sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of Him. He is the Spring of living water; we need to draw it and to drink. It quenches our thirst, and becomes in us a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.

[*To her Mother.*]

NEVERS, June 1, 1915.

It has just been decided to add from seventy to one hundred more beds to our Hospital. Our poor Major is frightened about it. We have reassured him by saying that we haven't enough to do, and that we shall be delighted.

. . . Speak to me again about prayer ; sometimes I can't understand why God keeps us waiting when we pray Him to reveal Himself to some soul.

Join in prayer with me for a wounded man whom I long to see possessed of peace. He has some trouble which preys upon him, but we can't find out what it is. I wish so much that this suffering might lead him to understand the love of God and bring him to Him.

End of July.

Here I am, a regular member of the French Army ! Before leaving for England, where I am going to nurse Dora, I had to sign an agreement to serve as nurse during the period of the war unless hindered by some important cause. The Major has given me two months' leave of absence.

It was a rest to Renée to be in England, and a great happiness to her sister to have her near, as her husband had very often to be away, and, later on, she enjoyed her tender care. As she always did, Renée undertook more than was really her own work, and she put her hand to everything in the house. She nursed with the greatest devotion her little god-daughter, born on August 22, 1915.

Here are a few thoughts taken from the correspondence with her friend :

SALISBURY, *August 1915.*

. . . Everything is simple to us who believe. But why are we so privileged as to know " Him " ?

Why are there so many who do not know His love? It must be so different for those who have Christ with them, and those who have not, when they pass through times of trial. As for me, I have never passed through great sufferings, so I have had no experience; but I believe that Christ can give strength to endure sufferings; which to all human appearance would seem too heavy to bear. When one thinks of all those who suffer so cruelly, it seems to me that there must be some among them who have had such an experience, and who will grow grander and stronger because they have had more in common with the sufferings of Christ.

. . . I want to tell you again the "Wonder" which I have read this evening. I am filled with emotion and gratitude at such love! "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of Mine eye" (Zech. ii. 8). When one rests in such Hands as these, how can we worry about what we meet with on our way? We have no business to be anxious. He will take care of us.

I should like to tell you to-day about the importance of a moment set apart for God, and at the same time the blessing which flows from it. S. D. Gordon says so well that our inner life cannot develop properly without a daily contact with Him Whom our lives ought to resemble. He calls the special time set apart to listen to God, and to speak to Him, "The morning tryst." "Tryst" is a Scottish word which means the rendezvous of two friends.

Christ Himself desires this rendezvous. If the first thing in the morning, at the dawn, when the mind is rested after the night in which God has watched over us, we then enter into communion with Him, we can keep conscious of His presence all day, and at evening we can say, like the disciples at Emmaus, "Abide with us, Lord!" How beautiful that Christ Himself should ask us to consecrate that moment to Himself! Why not do everything we can to overcome difficulties, so as to go to Him to receive His instructions and His strength before beginning the duties of the day?

What is difficult is, not to be *hurried*, but to take the necessary time and not to let it be occupied with other things. Then one has to learn to forget all else, so as to have but the one object in view, which is to meet with God and know Him better. What joy to feel Him near! How happy are those who enjoy His presence every moment!

SALISBURY, September 14, 1915.

. . . Willie went away to the French front yesterday. I think at parting he was even more upset than Dora. Dora stood still on the doorstep, watching, until the silhouette of her husband was out of sight. She has been so brave! Madeline cried and wanted her food, and one feels that the little one is her mother's greatest comfort.

Before returning to her post at Nevers, Renée went



[Facing page 64.]

to spend a few days at Crans, and took part in the Conference of Students at Sainte-Croix.

[*To her Mother, on her return to Nevers.*]

October 18, 1915.

You will have received my wire telling of my safe arrival here. I think of you so much. There is no place like Crans. After leaving you, I have a feeling of coldness and emptiness around me. I find, like the soldiers, that it is always harder to return to the front after having been awhile in the warm home nest. I can't tell you how much I enjoyed being with you all. The bright days at Crans and Sainte-Croix will be a help to me in times of difficulty. It is the personal experience of the love of God which must help us in all sufferings, for God loves every one of His creatures even as He loves me, and I recall to my heart all the proofs of His love ! Thank you for all you have given me ; thank you for all your love !

12.30 *Midnight, HOSPITAL 41, NEVERS.*

I am again in the thick of the work. We pass the whole day in the Hospital, and have hardly any time to write. I am glad that this night duty gives me time to tell you all I am thinking about. I am watching a wounded man who has contracted tetanus in spite of preventive injections. It is the first such case I have nursed. What a terrible

disease it is ! The doctors hope to save him, but he must not be left day or night. He was a fisherman. Last night he was delirious, and he fancied he was in danger on the sea. In agonized tones he cried for help ; he wanted to get out of bed, and we had to hold him down by force. His wife has come a long distance to see him, bringing their youngest child ; the poor woman expected to find him cured. Her despair was heart-rending when we were obliged to tell her of his danger. But since that, how brave she has been, trying to hide her emotion !

1 a.m., *October 30.*

Our days are very full ; we are at the Hospital from 7.30 a.m. till noon, then from 2 to 7 p.m., and very often we have to be on duty between eight and nine hours. We take it by turns to watch after midnight—the turn comes round every third night. I am surprised how easily I can do this ; even if one does miss a little sleep, it is very delightful to be able to do it. One patient said when he was wandering, “ I will pay you as much as you like, but do stay with me ! ” The progress of the tetanus is stopped, but he has congestion of the lungs now, with a temperature of 40° C. He is getting very weak. How one longs to see patients recover upon whom one has bestowed so much care! . . . Our tetanus patient is dead. I remained with him and held his hand to the last. We have another

very serious case, and one hardly dares to hope, for we had hoped so much to save the other.

2 a.m., HOSPITAL 41.

. . . Above all, let us keep close to Christ, being one with Him, and ready to meet Him, whether He comes for us, or whether He takes us to Him. So many die; one must be ready, for when once a person is ill, the suffering prevents them from getting nearer God.

The patient I am watching is unconscious. To relieve the terrible cramps of tetanus they have given him a strong dose of chloral. From time to time he calls for his little Robert or his wife.

How one longs to bring the suffering ones to Christ! What I am asking of God is that He may keep me from being too much absorbed by the work, so that I may be able to draw near to Him and receive from Him what I can then give to others.

CHAPTER V

MARRIAGE, AND CALL TO THE INDIAN MISSION, 1915-1916

A FRESH chapter in the life of Renée was about to open. The thoughts of marriage had more than once presented itself to her mind, and her loving heart pictured to her the beauty of two united lives. Already in 1910, at eighteen years of age, she wrote to her sister, Yvonne :

. . . When the hour appointed by God arrives, if I am worthy of it, God will grant me one of His greatest blessings, a Christian marriage. True love is a thing which one cannot create and which cannot be easily extinguished. If I should possess it some day, I shall know that it is a gift of God.

But it was in 1915, at the moment when she saw the happiness of three of her sisters, that the strong desire arose in her heart for a life of union :

. . . What I think to be the most beautiful thing in the world—she wrote to her betrothed sister—is the union of two beings rooted in Christ, the union of two wills, the energy of two minds employed in the service of God.

[*Again in May 1915.*]

. . . What joy it would be to me to meet, as you have done, with one with whom I should work for God, pursuing the same purpose.

. . . It is a wish which is there, at the very bottom of my heart, though I have never sought for it. I just leave it with God, and ask Him to answer it according to His will.

It was during these same days of May 1915 that God suddenly awoke in another heart the profound desire to find a helpmeet. He whom Renée was to meet a few months later did not feel at liberty, as Renée did, to ask God positively to grant the desire of his heart. He simply laid his request at the feet of his Master, little knowing that He had purposed to give him more than he had dared to ask.

In September 1915, on her return from England, Renée passed a few days at Crans before resuming her work at Nevers. It was at a Retreat for Students, and then at the Conference of Sainte-Croix, that Renée met Dr. Pierre de Benoit for the first time.

[*In a Private Notebook.*]

NEVERS, December 1915.

. . . I sometimes feel a strong presentiment of what is before me. . . . Nevertheless my strongest wish is to be prepared to tread a new path if it is the Will of God.

When she left Nevers in January 1916 to spend a few weeks with her family, Renée little dreamt that her

adieu to the wounded in Hospital 41 would be a final one.

After having again met Pierre de Benoit at the marriage of her sister, Yvonne, she wrote thus to the latter :

January 30, 1916.

. . . You know that my prayer is that God would reveal His Will to me; it is always good, kind, and perfect. He has not shown it to me visibly. I have no actual certainty to rest on, but He has answered me by putting into my heart a feeling of perfect peace and assurance that He will accomplish His own plans, and that they are the best. . . . Pray for me too . . . and ask God to prepare me to serve Him, alone or united to another.

. . . I remember that verse in Ps. cxxvii. : " Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." A house built by ourselves would probably not have a very strong foundation.

February 1916.

. . . May God Himself guide the life which I have dedicated to Him, and may He keep me in His peace and in the full confidence of His love.

Renée's prayer was answered ; a deep love sprang up in the heart of him whom God had placed in her way. On March 17, 1916, the day of her betrothal to Pierre de Benoit, she wrote to her mother :

. . . How can I describe to you my feelings, my joy, our joy, and our intense gratitude. God is

so good, I could never have dreamed that He would arrange everything so wonderfully, and that He would put so much joy into our hearts. We can do nothing but deeply thank Him.

In prospect of the future, of which we are ignorant, we feel confident, because we have the assurance that God Himself means us to walk together.

[*Shortly afterwards, to her Fiancé.*]

. . . How delightful it is to be absolutely sure that God is leading us! Very often He does it without letting us see far in advance, but at every step He is close by, and if we are faithful He will not let us go the wrong way.

. . . We do not deserve such happiness; we must not take it as a right. It is a gift of God—one of His best gifts. May we understand how to value it and how to thank Him.

It was not without regret that Renée gave up her vocation as a nurse, and bade farewell to her faithful friend and fellow-worker. She wrote to her on March 27, 1916:

. . . My heart is sad at leaving you. If I were not perfectly sure that I am on the path which God has marked out for me, and also sure that He will take care of you, I could not be happy. I have been thinking much over these five years of work, and I really feel giving up the Cap and Cross of the “Bon Secours.” As for you, you will go on giving

yourself entirely to the care of those who suffer—your task is a very beautiful one. Oh, so beautiful ! Perhaps it is only now I am leaving it, that I see it in all its beauty and grandeur.

I have a keen sense of both the beauty and the solemnity of all this joy and happiness in these difficult times. Our desire is to learn *to approach those who suffer and to love them.*

. . . If you chance to be near the Church of St. Etienne on Easter Sunday, offer for me there a prayer of gratitude and praise ; for it was there, last Easter, that I told the Lord the great desire of my heart, and He gave me the peace and assurance that He heard me.

At the time of his engagement, Dr. de Benoit was taking a course of Anatomy, with a view to giving instruction in a College of Medicine which several Missionary Societies were anxious to establish in China. But he was about to hear a call from a very different quarter. The war had dealt a disastrous blow to the beautiful work of the Basle Mission in India.

The German missionaries, who formed the greater part of the staff, had been interned or repatriated. In December 1914 the Swiss Missionary Delegation had been formed to render assistance to those Swiss missionaries who still remained in India. The only way to save the situation was to form a society consisting entirely of Swiss.

The Missionary Delegation realized that it would be necessary to send some one to India to examine the situation on the spot, and to get into direct communication with the English authorities and representatives

of the great Missionary Societies of England and America. A reiterated appeal was made to Dr. de Benoit, which he twice refused ; but the cry of distress from India at last convinced him that the call was from God, and he decided to accept the heavy responsibility. This decision, taken shortly before his marriage, confirmed the call to India which Renée had heard several years earlier.

The following passages from Renée's letters echo the serious decision which was about to be taken :

[*To her Fiancé.*]

May God direct every decision and show us clearly His Will. I pray earnestly that He may give you your marching orders. We want to be ready to go no matter where, and to start no matter when. The harvest is great, and our hearts are eager, are they not, to carry the Good News to those who have never heard it ?

April 30.

You don't know how glad I am to think of the task for which God is preparing you. Oh, that God may make me the true helpmeet that you need ! Now that this call has come upon you so unexpectedly, I am wondering what you will do. God will direct your decision, and I know He will teach me to rest quietly before Him, that I may the better hear His word. It will be so lovely to work together for the Master, and it may be to suffer together for Him. May He make us both worthy, and may He Himself send us into His harvest which is already whitening.

May 2.

I pray to God that our married life may never be troubled or hindered by any fault of mine.

May 8.

I should like to be able to intercede like St. Paul, to bow my knees unto the Father, that He would grant you according to the riches of His grace, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in you, that you may know His love, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God.

. . . In our married life it will be for you to carry the message, to open your mouth, to proclaim boldly and freely the Gospel; and my part will be to intercede with God, that He may prepare the hearts, and cause to spring up the seed of the Gospel which you will have sown.

May 14.

My family think that things are going on too fast. As for me, I have a great joy in the depths of my heart. If God really calls us to go, shall we not be profoundly thankful that He is calling us into His harvest? How good for us to be going away together! . . . We shall have a quiet time on board ship, and be able to study the Bible, and pray. (She was thinking of a voyage of seven weeks round the Cape to avoid submarines.)

But it was not without emotion that she looked forward to the separation from her dear ones. In the month of April she wrote to her sister, Yvonne, shortly before the latter left for America :

Yes, the heart aches at the thought of parting, but where God wills, and as He wills, that is our motto.

[*To her Friend at Nevers.*]

April 26.

We have just had a grand family gathering at Crans, probably the last for many a long year. There were thirty-two of us. We shall long remember those beautiful days at Easter when we were all together. In coming years, when we are scattered about the world, we shall in thought live over again those happy moments.

[*To her Fiancé.*]

May 24.

We have both of us had a striking experience of the love of God, of His providence in our lives and of the infinite care He has taken of us, and we should be able to speak of this love with assurance.

May 25.

We ought to be witnesses for Christ ; it seems to me more and more that it is by our everyday lives, by the transformation of our natures, that we can do this. S. D. Gordon says so well, that the world is in need of men and women who are like Christ. If we go to be His witnesses to the utter-

most parts of the earth—oh, may we go with His life really dwelling in us !

The marriage was celebrated in the little church at Crans on June 3, 1916.

Renée wrote to her friend a few days later :

. . . The truest happiness is to give oneself away. We are very happy to have given ourselves to one another, but it would not be perfect, and it might not last for ever, if we had not both together given ourselves to God. Our one and only object in life will always keep us united.

[*To her Mother.*]

June 19, 1916.

I keep more and more before me the vocation of a missionary. How glad I am that it should be my vocation ! May God invest me with His whole armour to fight and conquer for Him ! . . . There is in this world a tremendous war between good and evil, and we do not believe sufficiently in the presence of the enemy who seeks to turn men away from God.

[*To her Friend, G. R.*]

August 10, 1916.

Sometimes God leads us by a path which we should not have chosen, and we do not recover our quiet confidence and joy until our will is completely subjected to His. . . .

The life of the soul is of more importance than

our life here below. Let us watch carefully lest any desire, any personal ambition, should interfere with our spiritual life. . . . Let us be faithful in all the little everyday duties which God sets before us, and never forget that the work of the greatest importance in life is our sanctification. . . .

There are sometimes desires, affections, books, pleasures, things lawful in themselves which, without our knowing it, are hindering the development of our inner life ; then God pulls us up and shows us that they are taking up too much room in our hearts. We can only humble ourselves and bless Him for educating us with such patience and love. . . .

The strength to help us is close at hand.

We have only to claim it. . . .

I am more and more persuaded that we should set apart a portion of our time to draw near to God ; this is an act of obedience and faith, to which God responds with blessings greater than we can imagine. If at first we do it by constraint, as a duty, very soon the duty changes into a privilege, and these moments become the best in the whole day, and the source of our strength and joy.

August 28.

We are now enjoying at Crans these lovely last days of summer. With a long farewell in prospect one doubly enjoys it, and one tries to impress on the memory the image of these well-loved scenes.

[*To her Husband.*]

GENEVA, November 11, 1916.

I am asking God to make me faithful to my own special work—that of prayer. What a powerful means, if I knew well enough how to employ it, of helping and strengthening your hands! . . .

. . . It is such a joy to me to be associated with all your interests and difficulties as well as your joys.

. . . You know that half my heart is already out in India. Thank you for taking me out to those poor women who have not the privileges that I enjoy, but who have already all my love. God in His grace will give me the power to help them, and perhaps turn their eyes to Him.

I shall ever remember the talk we had a few weeks ago at the edge of the wood, when it seemed to us as if God were opening up to us the way of faith. He has led us already, He will do so more and more. Let us pray, and count upon Him to save souls.

“ My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning.”

CHAPTER VI

THE FIRST YEAR IN INDIA, 1917

THE de Benoits embarked on January 17, 1917, at Marseilles, on board the *Medina*. The renewal of the submarine warfare rendered the Mediterranean increasingly dangerous, and the number of vessels torpedoed was so great, that two weeks later the governments forbade women and children to travel by sea.

A few days after starting for Marseilles :

[*To her Friend, E. R.*]

BERNE, January 2, 1917.

We have seriously considered our departure, taking into account the imminent danger; but the call of God is too clear for us to shrink from any risk involved. If it should please God to take our lives, He would know how to make use of the sacrifice for the advancement of His Kingdom, and perhaps a larger contingent would be raised up to supply the great gaps in the mission field.

While waiting for the ship :

[*To her Friend, G. M.*]

MARSEILLES, January 14, 1917.

. . . I can't tell you how good God is to us. What calmness, what peace He has given to our

hearts ! . . . We are in His hands as truly when on the waves, as when quietly at home. . . .

[*To her Sister, Anne, in Paris, whom she was never to see again.*]

MARSEILLES, *January 16.*

I am writing to you the last message before leaving Marseilles, for I dare not let them know at home the date of our departure, for fear of the censor. The *Medina* will leave the port to-morrow about noon. . . . It is a serious step to separate ourselves thus from all our loved ones ; but chance has no power upon our lives. They are in the hands of Him Who has fixed their term.

May God be with you and bless your work ! We shall be bound together in prayer. Accept our loving thoughts, and "au revoir" if God will !

ON BOARD, *January 19.*

We have full instructions in case of danger. We are never to take off our life-belts. Each person has their life-boat indicated to them, and if it should be damaged they are to jump into the water from the side opposite to that on which the ship was struck. One must be warmly clad, and at night remain almost fully dressed, even though the danger is much less when it gets dark. In the morning we get up early so as to be ready as soon as the day begins to dawn. . . . We are very thankful to have been preserved thus far, and we

remain calm and confident in view of the days of danger that are still before us.

ON BOARD, *January 22.*

We are now on the open sea, constantly zig-zagging and making great *détours* to avoid the submarines. At table we sit beside two young Englishmen who have been torpedoed twice.

SUEZ CANAL, *January 24.*

To-day I want to tell you of the calm and delicious peacefulness we are enjoying after six days of suspense in the Mediterranean. . . . The prayers of our loved ones have not been in vain, and we feel more certain than ever that God Himself has called us to the work which lies before us. After traversing the Mediterranean, where our lives were in constant danger, it seems as if God had given them back to us, and we have gratefully dedicated them afresh to His service.

The following letters, dated from India, are mostly addressed to her parents.

On February 8, Renée and her husband went to Betgeri, a station of the Mahratta Mission : a poor district where malaria, dysentery, plague, and other epidemics wrought great ravages among the natives. The heart of Renée was heavy at the sight of the beautiful Mission Hospital which had remained without a doctor for years. She wrote :

. . . The whole population are very anxious to get a fresh doctor soon, and two deputations of

influential natives have been asking Pierre to remain with them. This first visit to a missionary station has been full of interest to me. . . . I had never imagined that the life of the natives could be so primitive.

Next, they went to spend ten days at Mangalore, the principal station of the Basle Mission on the West Coast. From there Renée wrote at the end of February 1917 :

During this week at Mangalore I have been able to get a general impression of missionary work.

The Christian congregation amounts to nearly 3000. On Sunday morning I was much impressed by the sight of the great congregation, so quiet and attentive. The service, conducted by a native pastor, was in Kanarese, so that we could not profit by it; but we thought upon all the efforts, the struggles, the sacrifices, and the prayers that must have been needed to procure such a victory over paganism.

One day we went down into the native quarters of the town, Mme. L., two Bible-women, and myself. We went into several of the houses. The native houses that are anything more than mere huts have a kind of verandah. They are sometimes very small, just protected from the sun and the prying eyes of passers-by by mats or leaves of the palm tree. It was here that we took our places, the native women naturally sitting on the ground, and we on camp stools. One of the Bible-women began

to talk to them, either reading them a Bible story or showing them pictures. The pictures are an extraordinary attraction ; in a moment the audience is doubled, and I never saw such an expression of delight as was upon the faces of both young and old, who were never tired of looking at them. When there were any men present, the conversation changed to discussion. One of them, a Brahmin, declared that all that is visible is nothing but "Maya," that is imagination ; all that we see has no existence, it is not real. Another, a witch doctor, who had heard the Gospel several times, declared that if we professed to follow Christ we ought to be able to perform the miracles that He did ! This day was full of interest and novelty to me. I look forward with the greatest joy to the time when we shall know one of the languages of the country, and be able to enter freely into the houses and learn to know the people.

. . . How can I describe my feelings in view of such a task as I see opening before me ? If one thinks of the difficulties and the sacrifices, one may soon get discouraged ; but it is worth while to struggle on and leave one's dear ones, if God in His grace will make use of us to spread the light of His love which can transform so wonderfully the hearts and lives of men. May God give us a deep love for the souls of these people ! It is necessary that the Spirit of God should work mightily here as in all the world besides.

It was in Calicut, the capital of Malabar, that the de Benoits settled, and it was there that Renée was to pass the greater part of her two years in India. During the often recurring absence of her husband Renée was often alone ; but she was surrounded by the missionaries of the station. She also made the acquaintance of some of the ladies of the English colony.

The Missionary Church at Malabar, with its 8000 Christians, had been passing through a severe crisis for more than a year. Taking advantage of the disorganized state of the Mission, the Enemy of Souls succeeded in scattering abroad a spirit of discord and insubordination, and there was a difficult time before peace could be re-established. Renée shared all these difficulties and anxieties with her husband, and upheld him faithfully with her prayers. She wrote to one of her sisters on April 9, 1917 :

We have been much humbled and grieved to see so much discord among the Christians, such misunderstanding, and such lack of love. Before the Mission can be reorganized, this spirit will have to give place to the Spirit of Christ. We feel the urgent need of a revival in all these churches ; that is the thought which most occupies our minds. We feel assured that we may dare to ask it, and may count on receiving it. We can already praise God for having changed the feelings of some hearts, and having brought about a certain amount of concord. His Church ought to be a shining light ; a source from which the true life should flow.

Almost from the moment of her arrival Renée took an interest in the Young Women's Christian Association,

which was frequented mostly by Eurasians. She was deeply pained by the lack of religious life which she found there. Very often there was not a word of religion, not a prayer nor a hymn to be heard, and Bible Classes were very rare. Confronting such a situation Renée felt very weak. She wrote :

The conflict against the enemy is very hard here, harder perhaps than in Switzerland, and our friends there ought to understand more about our difficulties, and help us to overcome them by their intercessory prayers.

The following letters are dated from Kotagiri, in the Nilgiri Hills or Blue Mountains, where a great many missionaries and other Europeans go every year for some weeks, to escape the worst of the heat and renew their strength both physically and morally. It was the occasion of their making some useful acquaintances, and the de Benoits were detained there until the end of June, by interviews with the Madras Government, of which the summer capital, Ootacamund, is not far from Kotagiri. The Nilgiri Hills are a group of mountains 2000 feet in height, which rise abruptly out of the plain in Southern India.

KOTAGIRI, May 2, 1917.

The situation of the Mission is still very uncertain. What are God's thoughts about it ? We feel our own helplessness more than ever. We must leave all in God's hands. We are up against an insoluble problem. If we were not quite certain that God Himself has brought us here, we should not have the courage to go forward. He has already done

great things for us, and if it is His Will that the work should continue, He can do greater things still. Lately, at a religious Convention, we had a vision of the power of God whereby His purposes are accomplished, and a vision of the riches of Christ which are on purpose to supply our need.

We desire to go forward interceding, praying, and humbling ourselves. We want our lives to be lived in close communion with God, so that we may know His Will.

KOTAGIRI, June 21, 1917.

How powerful and active the enemy seems to be, and what need we have to watch and pray that we may stand fast in communion with God ! We have been reading Heb. xi. and xii., those magnificent chapters on faith, that faith-vision by which we behold things not seen as yet (Heb. xi. 1, 7, 13, 20, 26, 27), which permits us to contemplate a God of Love, even in the darkest hours, even in a war like this, where the trials are the most heart-breaking. Many people have lost this faith-vision ; the enemy has been able to hide the vision of the God of Love.

[*A few days later.*]

. . . We have great need of your prayers. It seems almost impossible to carry on so vast a work with such a little handful of missionaries. When are we to have reinforcements ? But God sees—He knows—He is able.

The letters dated from Kotagiri are rich in passages speaking of the *spiritual influence of missionaries*.

I have been thinking about the operation of the Spirit of God within us ! Oh, how I long for it ! But how many obstacles there are in my own heart ! We feel so keenly that the greatest activity without the co-operation of the Spirit is vain and fruitless.

. . . Missionaries can and ought to relegate outward activities more and more to the natives, and make it their principal object to deepen the religious life of their native helpers, pastors, catechists, evangelists, schoolmasters, and Bible-women.

One is so ready to fall asleep, to do one's everyday work as a routine, without that burning love, that untiring zeal for winning souls to Christ. Instead of being inspectors and masters, missionaries ought to be inspirers of spiritual life. . . .

Let us not be content with bringing souls to Christ, but labour and pray for them till the Spirit purifies them, so that Christ may dwell in them.

. . . We have been passing lately through deep experiences which we shall never forget. God has been showing us how far we are from being what we ought to be. I am speaking of the inner life, that death to sin, that Christ-like life which should be ours. Missionaries are looked upon as spiritual leaders. They set the example ; they ought to show others their faults. You can understand the danger, and how necessary it is for such a work

that one should be transformed oneself by the Spirit of God.

. . . If the religious life of Christians ought to develop in different ways, they ought to pray, like the Apostles, that they may receive the Spirit after being baptized (Acts viii. 15). We are expecting a revival. Help us by your prayers.

. . . During this time of waiting, and of uncertainty as to the future, our great work lies in meditation, prayer, and intercession. In this I can unite with Pierre ; we can encourage one another, fight side by side, setting apart the necessary time for this, and leaving other matters alone. The climate makes one slack and lazy ; but the Spirit of God can overcome these obstacles. “ Our sufficiency is of God ” (2 Cor. iii. 5-6).

July 10, 1917.

How I wish God would employ me to lead some souls to Him ; latterly my prayer has been that He would humble me profoundly before Him. Oh, how little I can as yet see all my sin, my worthlessness, all that separates me from His holiness ! I have been struck by the thought that the Holy Ghost descended upon Christ after that act of humiliation—the baptism of repentance, of which He certainly had no need. It seems to me that God cannot give us His greatest blessings until He has opened our eyes and given us a profound conviction of sin. The Beatitudes speak to us of this. “ Blessed are the poor in spirit,”—the kingdom

of heaven, and all spiritual blessings are for the humble. "Blessed are they that mourn,"—those who weep over their sins ; after having known this sorrow they will know fully the joy of pardon. "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness,"—that is to say, those who feel their misery and their sin and their need of Christ and His justification ; they shall possess His life in abundance.

Darling mother, pray with me that God may give me no rest till He has deeply humbled me and emptied me of myself, that my life, wherever He may place me, may not remain fruitless, but bring forth fruit for His glory.

On the return to Calicut at the beginning of the rainy season :

July 23, 1917.

This morning it is still raining ; everything is damp—shoes, clothes in the wardrobe, books, etc. The salt melts on the table, and the bread tastes mouldy. The air is heavy and saturated with moisture. The rain comes through the roof ; that often happens during these torrential rains. We have all sorts of adventures with the vermin : the rats eat the soap and even the candles on the table by my bed ; the ants get into the larder ; the termites gnaw the woodwork of the house, coming back every time we drive them away ; even our metal pipes are attacked by the beetles. One must get used to it, and be a bit philosophical !

CALICUT, *August 7, 1917.*

What blessed experiences we have in these difficult times! God has always one object in view, that is to raise us higher; and one means He uses, is suffering.

The thoughts of Renée often reverted to her dear ones.

September 25, 1917.

I often picture very vividly to myself the clear, bright September days, the magnificent view of the mountains, the calm lake; and then call to mind the sweet family life made up of joy and happiness—all of which I owe to you. It haunts me, and often makes me long to see you all again.

[*To a Friend.*]

December 11, 1917.

. . . It sometimes seems as if one were “blockaded”¹ from all that one loves; nevertheless though the ships are held up, and the telegraph refuses its services, yet loving hearts are still in communion, united to one another by Him Who watches over us, and Who loves us.

[*To her Sister, Yvonne, in America.*]

KOTAGIRI, *May 20, 1917.*

The further we advance the more we feel united to one another. We have lived together in our

¹ Allusion to the submarines.

happy years of childhood, and now, though far away, God lets us have the same experiences, and our affection is strengthened. Like you, my heart is full when I think of all our loved ones left behind.

The other day I heard a missionary speak on that beautiful passage in St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians : " Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark. . . ." He showed me all that the Apostle must have left behind him—his high position, etc. ; but his thoughts did not dwell on them, he forgot them that he might press forward the better. This I thought over, and I now understand that God requires us to do something of the same kind. When we think of those we love we ought not to allow our thoughts to awaken regret in our hearts ; there is a sense in which we ought to " forget " them, that we may the more easily press forward with courage and without hindrance.

You understand what I mean ? Our dear ones are an immense help to us, and we can never be too thankful to God for giving them to us. What a comfort the dear letters of mother are !

A few days after the birth of her little girl, Renée wrote to her mother :

CALICUT, September 4, 1917.

How I wish you were with me for a moment to share my joy and happiness ! Our hearts are full

of gratitude to Him Who has just given us such a precious gift. Claire-Lise is sleeping peacefully in her blue bassinet at my side.

[*To her Friend.*]

September.

. . . Even in the midst of all the anguish of these troublous times, God still sheds some great joys upon the path of His children. Our little Claire-Lise has no idea of the time of distress in which she has made her appearance.

This gift of God makes me think of the words, "God will accomplish the desires of them that fear Him." You know how richly God has fulfilled the desires of my heart, oh, with what love our Heavenly Father surrounds us ! Claire-Lise has already taught me more than one lesson. What trust, what perfect confidence there is in such a dependent little being !

CALICUT, *October 16, 1917.*

I wish you could see us just now. It is nine o'clock in the evening, Pierre is reading, and while I am writing I have Claire-Lise on my lap. This is her favourite hour ; she is not often asleep at this time, but she lies quite still and gives us such sweet little smiles. Pierre often stops work to look at her, and as for myself I could never have believed that the word "daughter" could sound so sweet as when one can say "my daughter."

October 15.

It is good to keep silence before Him that we may listen to His voice. We are reading the Prophet Jeremiah. His words are so appropriate to the present time, and we wonder why there are no prophets now to lift up their voice to declare that it is our sin, our departure from God, which has brought these terrible judgments on the whole world. God is not more silent than He was in times gone by. He is speaking now, but our ears do not hear, our eyes do not see, and we do not know how to keep silence ourselves, so that we may be able to hear Him.

. . . It appears to us more and more clearly that humility is the quality most essential to the missionary, who is so easily tempted to think himself superior to those around him. God must give us all the wisdom, tact, humility, and love necessary for us to know how to act. I don't think we take the Sermon on the Mount seriously enough. God requires something beyond the ordinary in our lives. If our weapons are not spiritual, if we do not know how to efface ourselves, if we try to get the upper hand, if we resist violence, if we are not poor in spirit, in what are we beyond the ordinary? . . .

We ought not to be content with a certain Christian ideal, but should really seek to possess the Spirit of Christ which will enable us to love

those who love us not, to meet exigencies, to give more than we are asked for, not to judge others, to be gentle and humble in heart towards those who attack us—in a word, to act like Christ, though this will be foolish in the eyes of the world. . . . May God carry on in us His work of sanctification, so that He may be glorified by our holy lives !

[*To her Sister, Anne, in Paris.*]

December 16, 1917.

The situation of the Mission is getting every day more and more anxious. It is really a miracle that the work is carried on at all with the little handful of men still remaining here. Some are alone, at stations where there were formerly ten missionaries. Many of these are much over-worked, and we dare not count on reinforcements for two or three years. But God has helped us marvellously thus far. What a comforting thought that He knows all about it ! That word in Ps. ciii. has struck me much : “ The Lord has pity . . . For He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust.” And He can uphold us in our weakness.

CHAPTER VII
END OF THE STAY IN INDIA, 1918
RETURN TO EUROPE AND LAST ILLNESS,
1919

In reading the following fragments of letters, one is struck by the importance attached by Renée in an ever-increasing degree to personal sanctification, which she placed far above outward activity in the service of God. This subject is of such importance that we have not shrunk from several repetitions. There are certain passages which are like an echo of the work which the Spirit of God carried on in the soul of Renée during the year 1918, which was to be the last of her life.

[*To her Mother.*]

CALICUT, January 12, 1918.

If it were not that on account of Claire-Lise I dread the long journey of two days and two nights, I should have gone with Pierre to the Mahrattas of the south. I should have liked to go and see Mme. S., who is worn out with caring night and day for the poor children that are found half dead with starvation. Another thing has hindered me, too. I have been appointed secretary to the

Young Women's Christian Association in Calicut. I have the responsibility of organizing the meetings every week, and I have to prepare most of the Bible-class lessons myself. We are expecting a secretary from the General Committee, and I must be here to receive her. This is a piece of work which God has given me. I was rather nervous when I heard that I was to be appointed, but I felt that God would help me, and so He has.

. . . I have taken my first Bible class. God blessed me in the preparation, and He has manifestly helped me, even with the English, though I cannot yet speak very fluently. I was quite surprised when Mrs. S. told me that I had not made one mistake.

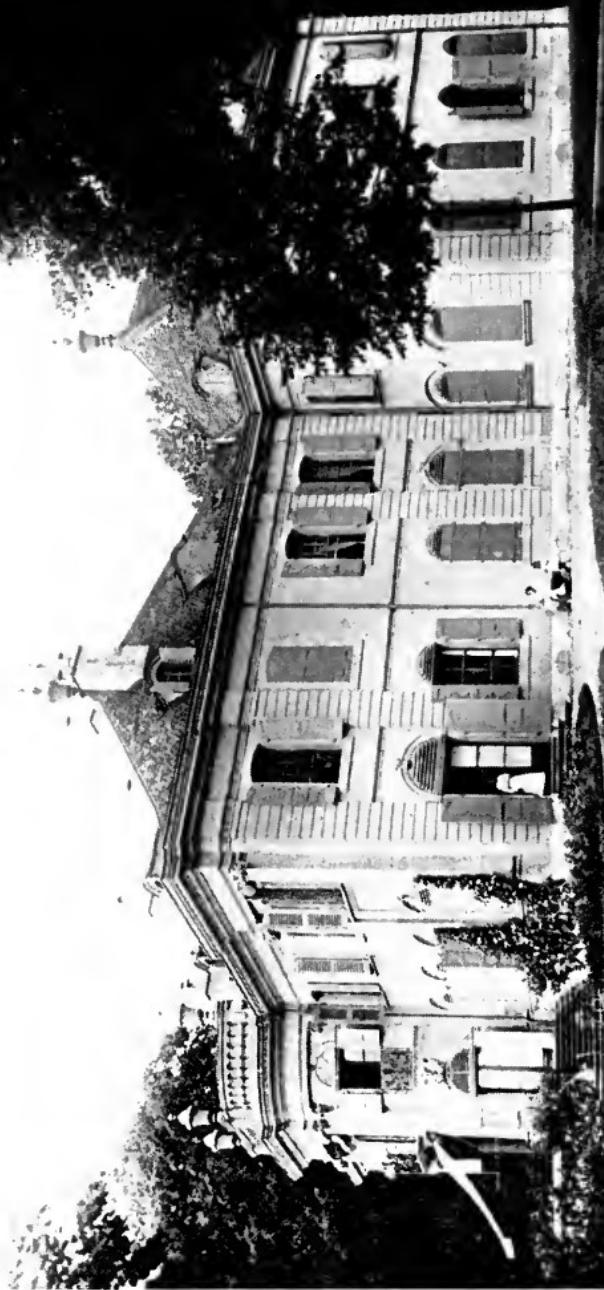
It is good to be always having some new experience of the kindness of God. Oh yes, He hears prayer, and He likes to make us a source of blessing.

CALICUT, February 1918.

We have learnt so many things during this first year. God has led us through experiences that we shall not forget. He wishes above all that we should learn from Him to be meek and lowly in heart. It is difficult to attain to the meekness of Jesus Christ, particularly in this country where the climate inclines one to be irritable. Folks quarrel about nothing, and are much more touchy than our people at home. To meet and overcome this evil, it is necessary to root all selfishness out of

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our own hearts, for it is only by sweetness and humility that we can conquer it in others.

. . . We have learnt by experience that by faith . . . and prayer we can pull down strongholds ; we have learnt to pray better. Never have we prayed with . . such earnestness as since we have been here in the midst of the battle. We have learnt to meditate more, and I can't tell you what our united meditations have meant to me ; we have learnt to reflect, to think, and to study the Bible more methodically, and God has spoken to us by His Word. We can never sufficiently bless and praise our God for all His supreme goodness and faithfulness to us.

March 3, 1918.

We have just had a very busy week. We have had a General Conference of all the missionaries, held here at Calicut. It took some ingenuity to put up twenty-two people in the five houses here. The meetings were held in our house, and some most important decisions were arrived at.

This General Conference of the Swiss Missionaries, in view of the impossibility of getting reinforcements, had to take the deplorable step of completely abandoning part of the old Basle Mission's field of labour, especially that of the beautiful district of Malabar. Then, . . . to obtain the Government authorization to continue missionary operations in the Kanarese-speaking districts, it was necessary to form a Swiss Missionary Society in India.

March 23.

Pierre has gone to Madras to ask for the registration of the new society ; it is the last hope of continuing part of the work. But we shall have to give up the whole district of Malabar from lack of workers. It is heart-breaking to have to close the schools and orphanages which are so much needed here. We shall have to give up the study of Malayan, and if God opens the door we must pluck up all our courage to learn Kanarese, which is an entirely different language.

- ✓✓ In a letter from Renée to her sister, Odette (March 1918), she speaks of a young Hindoo, Sundar Singh, who is exercising a profound influence in India, and whose preaching attracts great crowds. This young man, who is barely thirty, was converted at fourteen ; he was persecuted by his family and his people, and has now retired from the world at the call of God, and dressed in the long yellow robe worn by Hindoo saints, and possessing nothing but his New Testament, he goes about the country preaching the Gospel. In spite of violent persecutions he has penetrated even into Thibet.
— He accepts no money, and lives simply upon the food given to him. Sometimes he has been days with nothing to eat, or has had to content himself with a few leaves that he has found by the way.

On passing through Calicut, Sundar Singh was entertained at the table of the de Benoits, and it was from his own lips that Renée heard the following account of the wonderful deliverance which he had experienced.

. . . Being driven brutally from a village where he had just been preaching the Gospel, Sundar

Singh sought refuge in a cavern in the midst of a neighbouring forest, and was preparing to spend the night there. Suddenly a band of armed men came upon him. It seemed that his last hour had arrived, and closing his eyes he lifted his soul to God, and prepared to meet Him. A few moments afterwards, to his astonishment and without knowing that anything had happened, he found himself alone. So he lay down and slept peacefully. In the morning when he awoke there was the same band of men with him again ; and, as on the evening before, he offered to make the sacrifice of his life. "Here I am," he said, advancing towards them ; "do what you like with me." But instead of laying hands on him these men said : "We have not come this morning to do you any harm, but to ask you who were with you last evening. We had indeed intended to kill you, but you had so many people around that we could not get at you." Then Sundar Singh understood that God had sent His angels to protect him. His life is full of miraculous experiences, just like the Apostles. It is a life of entire self-renunciation, irrevocably devoted to God ; a life of persecution and suffering, but full of overflowing joy, incomprehensible to those who do not know Jesus ; a life of poverty in the eyes of the world, but possessed with the power from on High.

KOTAGIRI, *March 29.*

. . . We should like to be with our own people,

to share with those we love in the sorrows of the present time ; but I am ready if such is God's leading to remain in India as long as necessary.

[*To her Mother on her Birthday.*]

KOTAGIRI, April 6.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost (Rom. xv. 13).

Yes, we can and we must rejoice in the patient waiting for the fulfilment of the promises, in the Victory of Jesus Christ, and His Coming again. Oh ! if we longed more for His Coming, if the Church had more of the love of a Bride for her Bridegroom and waited for Christ in that spirit, would He not come soon ?

[*To her Sister, Yvonne, in the Argentine.*]

KOTAGIRI, April 1918.

I understand so well how you miss the society of other Christians ; I feel it the same, especially on the plains where I can't understand the Malayan services. All the same I think we have special privileges, for at home we should not have had the experiences which God has given to us here.

One of the great lessons which I have learnt is that it is impossible to follow Jesus if we are not meek and lowly in heart like Him.

Are not Christians too regardless of these essential qualities in the character of Christ ? Has not the

principle of force, the spirit of domination which exists in the world, influenced our own lives a little, and disturbed that spirit of humility and perfect gentleness which ought to be evident in us ?

I have also understood better lately that the fruits which we should bear, and which honour the Father, are not those outward works which we are so ready to accomplish for Him, but the work of sanctification, obedience, and love—the fruits of the Spirit which Paul speaks of in Galatians.

Renée enlarged upon this subject in several letters, dated about this time, and attached great importance to this central thought in the Christian life : “ He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit ” (John xv. 5). Bringing forth fruit is not so much in the first instance working, acting, even bringing souls to Christ, as being sanctified for the sake of others, growing in love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness. . . . (Gal. v. 22-23).

. . . If, during this first year in India, I have hardly done any direct work for God, from not knowing the language, He has allowed me to draw nearer to Him, and I have learnt to know and love Him more ; and if my whole life is under the control of His Spirit He will naturally be able to use me in His service and let me glorify Him.

[*To her Friend, Sister Rose-Marie.*]

April 13.

I am so fond of Paul’s prayer for the Thessalonians : “ We also pray always for you, that our God would

count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you" (2 Thess. i. 11, 12).

That is my prayer for you, and it is surely the prayer of Christ when He is interceding for us.

. . . I have lately understood better than ever what it means that God should have pleased to be our Father through Jesus Christ. When one has a little treasure of one's own to cherish, one knows a little the feeling of a father's heart, which is always seeking the good of his child, surrounding it with care and love, often without the child knowing it. Later on, as the child grows older, the father has further riches and new gifts for him if he asks for them.

Oh, let us draw near to our Heavenly Father to claim all the spiritual gifts which He is willing to bestow on us!

May 13, 1918.

We are rather anxious about the health of all our missionaries. Almost all of them ought to return to Europe. Such a long time in this climate and under such difficult circumstances is not easy to endure.

June 19, 1918.

Difficulties accumulate on every hand; difficulties so unexpected and humiliating that we hardly know

where we stand. However, it all teaches us to throw ourselves more completely into the arms of God, and to live in more entire dependence on His Grace. We must learn, whatever happens, to rest in God. This morning I read Isa. lxi. 1-3, and I was struck by the thought that we could be clothed with the spirit of praise instead of the spirit of heaviness. Oh, let us go on blessing God and counting all His mercies! We want to say with Paul in 2 Cor. iv. 16-18: "For which cause we faint not. . . ."

CALICUT, *July 1918.*

Here we are, back again in our home. As we were coming down from Kotagiri to the plain we had to halt to give Claire-Lise her milk, and we were very much amused by the antics of a tribe of monkeys who were playing only a few yards away from us. The second stage of the journey was through the jungle; the natives never venture there alone by night, and if there are signs of elephants about they refuse to go there at all. I am very glad to be back again, to take up my work here. I have the joy of conducting a service once a week for the seventy young girls in the boarding-school. For the Y.W.C.A. I have to prepare Bible lessons three times in the month. Every time I feel how much I need the grace of God. I can do nothing for them by myself—nothing at all; but if the Spirit of God acts, the

weakest words may become words of life. I believe we don't realize enough that if we dare to do something for Him, it is only as Paul says, "By His grace" (1 Cor. xv. 10).

. . . Oh, if only the love of Jesus could be revealed to all these crowds of people, and they could know Him as the Way, the Truth, and the Life!

August 22.

How beautiful and cool it must be at Crans; sometimes I long intensely to see you all again. You will be all together in the beautiful month of September, and I would give much to see for a moment the clear blue lake and the mountains.

September 1918.

If you are glad to get news from us, I think it is a much greater joy and need for us to receive yours. Lately I have been living so much with you in beautiful Crans, picturing the day when we shall meet again. When will that be? God seems to hide the future from our eyes so as not to let us see what He has in reserve for us. . . .

As for Pierre, we have been calculating that whilst in the first two years of our married life he has been obliged to leave me one day in six, in the beginning of the third year he is away three days in six. That is a great deal, is it not? Latterly, I have been all alone in the house.

September.

. . . Truly God is the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls. He surrounds us with His care and tenderness. He is always near. He knows us so well ; He takes such a jealous interest in our sanctification.

. . . There are certainly difficult times coming. Oh, that He may grant us to keep an unshakable confidence, and a triumphant faith in His love and grace towards us ! . . .

Claire-Lise is our great comfort and our ray of sunshine in all the gloomy days.

September.

God places us in circumstances where it is above all things necessary to take the attitude of Mary, to listen, and try to understand His Will instead of acting on our own account.

CALICUT, September 21.

. . . I find in the version of Stapfer a passage which I often repeat to myself ; it is the advice of Paul to Timothy : " Thou therefore, my child, seek for strength in the grace that is in Jesus Christ." What encouragement in all circumstances where we find our poor strength less than weakness ! In the unfathomable treasures of that grace we may find at every moment the power necessary to overcome every difficulty, to conquer every foe, to submit ourselves to the Divine Will, and to carry

on our daily task. . . . Every day we can understand better the immense importance of carrying to souls, who know it not, the message of the Gospel, the good news of a Saviour.

PALGAT, October 22, 1918.

Pierre has been preaching here, and has held several meetings ; he has also been evangelizing in the houses of the Hindoos, accompanied by a Christian who translates for him. He has been well received, and this has encouraged him. For my part, I have been with Mme. B. and a Bible-woman to visit the upper-class Brahmins. Some of the women were covered with jewels ; one of them had the jeweller there, who was fixing with his instruments great silver anklets on a baby of five months old ! One young woman came in with her baby on her hip ; it was her fifth ; she was married at twelve years old, and her mother (who was present) at eleven. In certain castes they believe that if a girl is not married at twelve years she will have no part in a future life. Among the Brahmins it is considered the greatest sin. Another woman was very much interested to hear that I had a baby ; she has come this evening to see Claire-Lise. I am longing to go myself to visit these women who know nothing of the God of Love. But there are many difficulties, and I believe that God must give a special preparation to His messengers. The good news of the Gospel ought to

be more and more a reality to me. I seem to hear constantly as if addressed to myself the words of Christ to the Samaritan woman : “*If thou knewst the Gift of God.*” Yes, if I knew all the grandeur, the efficacy, the power of the Gift of God could my lips remain silent ? And would it not be with power and wisdom that I should proclaim the message of grace ?

At the beginning of November the de Benoits left the district of Malabar, which it had been decided to abandon, and removed to Mahratta.

CALICUT, November 4, 1918.

We have suddenly decided to hasten our departure. We have only five days to arrange everything and remove to Betgeri. What has next year in store for us ? A return to you—or yet another year when our thoughts and affections will have to cross the ocean ?

The new committee formed at Lausanne will have to provide the funds and the men required. We are keeping the two large districts of Mahrattas and Kanara in the south.

There are other important questions to be settled in Europe, and the committee at Madras find it necessary for Pierre to return to Switzerland. It is also very important that a pressing appeal should be made for fresh workers, and that he should explain the exact situation. One great question is whether we can secure our passage soon

enough. We ought to leave here at the very latest some time in February. . . . We are resting in quietness and confidence, knowing that if it is God's will He will make everything easy for our approaching return.

December 24.

Just one hasty line to-day, Christmas Eve, to tell you that my thoughts are with you all. The sky is cloudless, and the rays of the sun burning. The picture of the dear home is vividly before my mind, more so than usual, because we are daring to hope for an early and joyful reunion.

We cannot be too thankful God has opened the way, for by His grace the task of Pierre is nearly accomplished. The Kanarese Evangelical Mission has been established. The Government allows the Swiss to carry on their work at the responsibility of the National Missionary Council.

The following was the last message, sent at Christmas to her sister, Yvonne, in America :

According to my earnest expectations and my hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death (Phil. i. 20).

BETGERI, *December 29, 1918.*

This is probably the last letter you will receive from me before our return. We have, at the last

moment, secured a passage on the *Manora*, which leaves Bombay, January 18. We shall be in the "Intermediate class," Claire-Lise and I will have to share a berth in a cabin with twelve or sixteen other ladies and children; Pierre will sleep in a hammock like the soldiers. It is a special arrangement made in order to accommodate as many people as possible. I hope I shall not be very ill! Au revoir, darling mother; how lovely to be able to say this!

The reunion was on February 7, 1919, at Geneva. The joy of Renée at being once more in the bosom of her family, and able to show them her little Claire-Lise, was at its height. ~~But~~ But no one suspected that she had already in her system the fatal germ of influenza which she probably caught in the train from Marseilles to Geneva. The fatigue of the uncomfortable sea voyage also, probably diminished her power of resistance. The day after her arrival at Geneva, she did not feel very well, and she soon developed influenzal pneumonia. In spite of all the devoted care with which she was surrounded, Renée passed peacefully away on February 19 in her twenty-seventh year, and with her, a little one which should have seen the light a few weeks later.

And now the loving heart has ceased to beat. The pure soul has taken its flight to expand in the light of Heaven. The beautiful eyes now closed on earth, have opened to behold the King in His beauty.

But it was not in vain that our dear one spent a few years on earth, and after beseeching God with tears to spare us the supreme sacrifice, and let us keep our precious treasure, we now seem to hear His voice saying

to us, "Let her go, her death may glorify Me more than her life." And so we bow humbly to His holy Will, knowing that He never makes a mistake. We rest in His unfathomable love, and from the depth of our hearts we can say, "Let Thy Name be glorified," and by His grace God has allowed us to see the fulfilment of His promise. His Name was glorified at the supreme moment of the last farewell, when her husband, with his deep voice which she so loved to hear, was able to sing that beautiful hymn :

"À Toi la gloire, ô Ressusité
À Toi la victoire pour l'Eternité."

"Glory to Thee, O Risen One
Who hast eternal vict'ry won."

His Name was glorified, when, feeling that she was dying, she trustfully committed to her husband her beloved little girl, saying, "You will love her . . . you will teach her to know God, that she may glorify Him." His Name was glorified when we saw as it were the Heavens opened, and our darling enter the presence of God, borne in the arms of the Saviour's love.

His Name was glorified when, beside that death-bed, and looking upon that sweet face so beautiful, so pure, so peaceful, we saw other souls, remembering the life of Renée, and in view of eternity, consecrating themselves afresh to their Saviour.

Oh, may His Name be glorified, and may that life, fallen into the ground as a grain of wheat, be a fruitful seed, which may by the grace of God produce a rich harvest !

"Father, glorify Thy Name!"

CHAPTER VIII

LETTERS OF APPRECIATION

"The love of Christ . . . passeth knowledge" (Eph. iii. 19).
TEXT INSCRIBED ON RENÉE'S TOMB.

AFTER the death of our beloved one, the vast number of letters of appreciation which we received from all sides were so precious and so unanimous that we thought it would be useful to publish a few of them to show how much God had been pleased to use His young servant.

We will begin with the mute testimony of the things which Renée left behind.

Her entire wardrobe was contained in an ordinary cabin trunk. In a little rosewood box we found her cross of the "Bon Secours," her nurse's watch, another watch, and two or three simple brooches. These were all her riches—nothing useless, no valuable jewels. She had not even accepted an engagement ring, as is usual, but wore nothing except her wedding ring. Her outward life corresponded with the inner, and with the Word of God which requires "not that outward adorning of plaiting the hair and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel, but the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price (1 Pet. iii. 3-4).

Her treasure was in Heaven, and she has left behind

a thing better than precious jewels. Her life, which was lived entirely for others, has shed abroad this fragrance of great price—*the love of God*, the seed of everlasting life. On looking back, we can trace everywhere the blessed fruits of her deep love. At home, she was to her parents a precious child, and an unfailing source of joy ; to her brothers and sisters, an example and stimulant in the path of consecration, leading them on towards the sublime object which she had in view, and her numerous friends give unanimous testimony to the blessed influence she shed around her.

As to her husband, she loved him in the most profound and complete sense of the word. To him she was not only an incomparable wife, a model mistress of a house, but a faithful friend, encouraging and supporting him in every way in the management of an extremely delicate and difficult task, labouring together with him above all by prayer and intercession, which spiritual communion still united them when he was far away.

Without this support he would have been discouraged on more than one occasion, and had not God answered their prayers, and removed obstacles which seemed insurmountable, the work of the Basle Mission in India would in all probability have come to an end. Nothing better expresses Renée's conception of the duties of a wife, than the text, Gal. vi. 2, which she had engraved on her wedding ring. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

And what shall we say of her maternal love ? It was a veritable revelation to all who had the privilege of seeing Renée with her little Claire-Lise. She was a perfect mother, and her last thought, her last wish for her darling child was that she should be surrounded with love, and taught to know and love the Lord.

Finally, she loved with an infinite compassion the little ones, the unfortunate, the wounded, the sick, and

all who suffered ; she could realize their troubles, sympathize with their pain, and soothe their sorrows ; and when we remember that the source of her love was in God, to whom she had dedicated herself from her childhood, we can understand the secret of her influence. The following testimonies which come from her intimate family circle and friends, from the villages of Crans or Burtigny, from the " Bon Secours," the wounded soldiers, and the Indian missionaries, all strike the same note, and bear witness to the track of brightness and blessing which she has left behind.

[*From her Sister, Anne, Mme. Aloïs Hentsch.*]

Renée has left a deep and blessed influence amongst us all. How shall I express what she has been to me, and will be every day ?

What bright memories I have of our childhood ; I can see her now amongst us, with her energy and love. I was often struck by her manner, and I remember this point in particular, in which I looked upon her as a model ; she was so truly humble that she was unconscious of it. We always found her sweet, tender, helpful, quick to understand and encourage us. She would always offer to do the most disagreeable things without making any fuss about it.

We very soon found out that she possessed an unseen power which sustained her, made her calm and happy, inspired her decisions, directed her course of life, and which could be seen in the very expression of her eyes. In spite of her sweetness and natural timidity, nothing could turn her aside

from an entire and continual obedience to the promptings of this inward voice. This resolution to be faithful developed in her day by day, producing a strong will, and great independence of character.

Later on, when our lives were parted far asunder, her influence did not cease, we always found in her letters the same tenderness ; something which showed us that her inner life was still making progress. As for myself, more than once when I have been in doubt and perplexity, the thought of Renée has been an inspiration to me. The steady unwearying tenor of her life has always seemed to me a striking and undeniable proof of the efficacy of her faith. She knew how to put into it something of that "extra-ordinary" nature of which she used to speak in her letters, as due to characterize a true Christian.

The hour of separation has struck sooner than we expected, and many of us have had to part with her without having had the joy of seeing her once more. When I saw her lie in her last sleep, so peaceful and solemn it was, a thought struck me which I had seen underlined in her Bible which lay beside her ; that thought seems to me to embody admirably what her life had been among us. It was not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, that she came declaring unto us the testimony of God. Her preaching and the example of her life, were not shown by convincing arguments,

but by the demonstration of God's spirit and power; so that our faith should not be founded on human wisdom, but on the power of God. The power of that God Who responds so wonderfully to those who seek Him, and give up all to follow Him.

[*From Mme. Sergy, Directrice of the Orphanage,
"La Maison," at Burtigny.]*

What a tender and respectful memory we have of Mme. de Benoit! As soon as she arrived at La Maison in 1909 our young friend showed her simple and loving nature; no work seemed too humble or too heavy for her. "But I came here to be useful, and I shall be so glad if somebody else gets a little rest while I am here." She won the hearts of the children at once, and they obeyed her without any trouble; at the harvest time, she would take a score of them out to glean in the fields, and come back with a big sheaf and a merry troop around her. In the village she was called "Queen Bertha." She was very humble, and many times we have heard her say that such and such a one of our helpers was so far better than she. In spite of her natural timidity she looked for opportunities to speak of her Saviour. "Oh! tell me what experiences God has given you here," she said one day, "I must experience them too, I am hungry and thirsty for the fulness of Christ." Her loving heart was much pained the day when we went to see several charitable institutions,

where there were miseries both moral and physical. On our return she counted up her privileges and compared them with the sufferings she had just witnessed. As we passed through a little wood she fell on her knees and prayed God in a touching prayer that she might serve Him in the persons of the little ones. Sweet darling, God answered her request, her short life has been full of service, and such service !

Renée also made a deep impression upon people who were only slightly acquainted with her. One student who met her at the Conference at Sainte-Croix in 1916 writes :

. . . The few words I heard her speak were a revelation to me of the sublimity and grandeur of the Christian faith. A faith so pure and lofty, and such a glowing charity, gave us an idea of the absolute sacrifice of the Christian life. I shall cherish a touching, and more than grateful remembrance of it.

We extract the following from the *Archives du Bon Secours*, May 1919, which follows a short biographical sketch with this epigraph, "May my life consist of an act of love" (Prayer of St. Thomas Aquinas) :

. . . But is it enough to say of a person : "She studied this, she went there, she did such and such things . . . ?" There are many beautiful lives hidden from the eyes of the world, many beautiful things done which are never recorded. On the

other hand; there are many lives with nothing to distinguish them but their position in society. Again there are many others who undertake grand and "interesting" things solely with the hope of making themselves interesting. . . . It matters little what Renée *did*. We remember her for what she *was*. And this is why we are trying to recall her for a moment, first of all for you, her school friends, but perhaps most of all for you, the younger students at the "Bon Secours;" who did not know her personally. How often lately, when the mention of her name has brought tears to our eyes, you have wished to know: "What was she like, she who was so much beloved?" and you have not dared to ask, feeling that our grief is too fresh . . . and that such things are not easy to talk about.

Well, first of all she was an excellent pupil, capable, attentive, and an indefatigable worker; conscientious and observant of the rules to the smallest detail; but to describe her fully one must add that she was a delightful companion, simple and merry, taking her full share of all that was going on that was youthful and happy. . . . "She beat us all in running," said a young boy, who had been on excursions with her and her brothers and sisters.

In the school, too, it would be unjust to describe her as a little saint, dreaming by herself, or blaming by her absence the exuberant gaiety of her surroundings. You remember how she used to sit

with you on the ground in a circle round the fire laughing and singing with all her heart. However, there was a pensiveness in her gaiety. An amateur poetess finely expressed it in some lines she wrote under a silhouette of Renée :

“ À la table animée d'une gaîté franche et saine
Gracieuse elle est assise, mais son âme est ailleurs.
Ne vous étonnez pas si ses yeux sont rêveurs,
Elle sonde le pourquoi des destinées humaines.”

“ At table her mirth ever flowed free and pure
With a grace all her own, yet with love set on high.
No wonder the far-away look in her eye,
She would know why so many such sorrows endure.”

(Trans. REV. J. HECTOR.)

Yes, the anguish at human misery, the ardent compassion for those who suffer, but also the conviction that there is a grand “ because ” answering to every “ wherefore ? ” This is what marked Renée’s character in an especial manner, and sometimes gave a certain air of seriousness to her expression otherwise so childlike and sweet. Everything in her demeanour expressed love and pity—even her habitual attitude—her deep pathetic eyes, her pure face often bowed and pensive, her figure slightly inclined forwards, her arms which seemed ready to be stretched out. . . . “ She seemed to us like a supernatural being,” wrote one of the soldiers she nursed. “ The air in the ward felt purer after she had passed through.”

I can see her again at the station of Vaize, when a trainload of wounded passed through ; she, brisk and indefatigable, while it was necessary to change the dressings as quickly as possible ; then when the pitiful work was but just finished, a last scene comes back to me : Renée sitting by the stretcher of a badly wounded man, trying to get him to dictate a few words to his wife on a postcard, her head bent down, attentive and gentle . . . so simple . . . and since it is true that a woman cannot meet a man without either raising or lowering his estimation of womankind . . . what must have been the transformation of this ideal in the minds of all these wounded men, whether rough or cultivated, simple or blasé, after Renée had passed through their lives ! However it was not all tenderness and sweetness in that face ; there were other features in which were the indication of a strong will, intense concentration, and a suppressed ardour which would have led to martyrdom if she had lived in the days of the confessors of the faith.

And this was what characterized the life of Renée. The work she did for the suffering was no pastime, no philanthropic amusement, no praiseworthy adjunct to her personality, no "ring of Polycrates" thrown into the sea to appease socialistic agitation . . . but it was like a gift complete in itself. . . . "A useless sacrifice," say the materialists, "a waste of life and strength on these foreign missions." . . . This is what is said of these martyrs by those who

have yet to learn that their blood is precious seed. And now more than ever in a world which rushes after pleasure, money, ambition, and luxury; young, educated people are needed who know how to devote their lives as a sacrifice, regardless of what that sacrifice may entail. The results that are unseen are the most important . . . and the world will die of famine that day when there is no one to be found willing to "cast his bread upon the waters."

It is by this personal consecration that Renée will live in our memories—she was a shining, helpful light even when she said nothing. For she did not talk very much—was not this one of her great charms? Yet she reproached herself for it. This was a point on which we never agreed. Renée was possessed with the idea that it was her duty to spread the faith that was in her by speaking to her companions personally and directly. Her natural reserve hindered this, but she accused herself of weakness and unfaithfulness. I tried to convince her that different people were made for different work . . . for instance in building, they are not the same people who design the architecture, make out the plans, and cart the materials . . . others again build up the edifice "in silence," like the Temple at Jerusalem; speech ought to be a spontaneous outburst, rather than a pumping up of our inner life. One can show one's faith by one's life better than by preaching.

Ah, Renée, you certainly had no need of words ! Did you not bear in your heart the love that overcometh, and inscribed on your forehead the words "I believe," which can cast down the strongest walls ?

DOCTORESSE M. CHAMPENDAL.

[*From A. Roche, Sergeant in 3rd Zouaves, nursed in the Hospital 41 at Nevers by Renée.*]

. . . How impossible it is not to have affection for your daughter ; she was so sweet, so good, her devotion was unbounded ! No ; every human being that knew her could not fail to love her.

At the declaration of war I had been four years in Morocco, far from those I loved, and living among people whose influence was usually very bad. Then came the war, the long marches on the retreat from Belgium, generally without food or sleep, and finally my wounds. All that, added to the bad thoughts which had been festering in my mind for four years, made me savage and wicked. Well, Madame ! Your daughter by her goodness, her gentleness, her untiring devotion, made me a little better. Not perfect, no, indeed, I am very far from that, but when I feel rebellious I think of the little ward at Hospital 41 where, stooping over my bed, your daughter while bestowing every care on my body, also influenced my mind. Then I remember how she tried to convince me, and I do try to become better, hoping to please her. I unite my sorrow

with yours, for her who was all goodness and self-sacrifice.

The following is from a Roman Catholic :

[From G. Aslangul, Sergeant of the 14th Regiment Infantry, wounded September 25, 1914, at the Moulin de Perthes, and nursed by Renée in Hospital 41 at Nevers. Letter addressed to Mlle. Menni.]

It is with the deepest sorrow that I have read your last letter with its terrible news. Poor dear friend ! We weep for her, we have a right to, as Jesus wept for His friend Lazarus. You loved her, Mademoiselle, I know, as a sweet and devoted friend ; you loved her for her great generous soul, and for the memories you had in common with her. But I loved her too on account of the circumstances which brought her into my life ; I loved her like a sister, like a mother, and now that the dear soul has gone, I still love her the same ! I was suffering and she succoured me, and so gently, so sympathetically !

Oh, if I could only give to her family in their deep sorrow, to M. de Benoit and to the dear little Claire-Lise, who is dear to me too, a little of the consolation that she gave to me ! How much I should like to be with you, to talk about her ! Oh, I can see her now, after a hard day's work, making the round of the wards with you, Mademoiselle. O my God, why hast Thou taken away our dear friend ? We used to call for

Mademoiselle Renée! and you perhaps never saw, Mademoiselle, how that beautiful expression, so calm, so full of God, and her sweet smile, filled us with confidence and peace. We no longer dreaded the night! Poor little humble soldiers of France, we were resting, watched over by an angel of God! Yes, we were! You see, Mademoiselle, that I cannot tell you all my sorrow, but I go down on my knees before God and say to Him: "Lord of all mercy, give to our sister Thy peace, give her her reward of eternal happiness, for she was always Thy servant"; and it is true, is it not? For in this world her life was in God, so that her death is only a transformation of her life. She has gone to God as naturally as a child goes to her father. . . . And now, Mademoiselle, from Paradise, where she is enjoying the fulness of life, she looks upon us. Yes, she sees me writing to you, she sees all the sad feelings which stir my heart—our hearts. For I don't believe in death, since Jesus has vanquished it by His supreme sacrifice. . . . For us, with all the saints, she is singing the Glory of God. . . . Happy Mme. de Benoit! We weep for ourselves, for our own sakes, who are left alone in our trouble, deprived of your example and affection, and for those who were near and dear to you, who have lost the happiness that you used to spread around you! Perhaps you would not like us to weep! Remember we are still in "this body of death" of which St. Paul speaks, and it is a relief to our

hearts. Our prayers will rise to you as to our beloved saints, to whom you now belong, that you may ask for us, not this world's goods, but that which we need for our weakness, that we may one day meet again in the heavenly land. . . . God is always near to us, and the sweet Virgin Mary, and our saints, and Mme. de Benoit. . . .

I expect to go to Lyons for a few days, and if nothing prevents, I shall go on to Geneva to pray at the tomb of our friend. Oh, may I be able to accomplish this pious pilgrimage! . . .

[*From Mrs. Stokes, Wife of the Medical Missionary at Calicut.*]

The presence of Renée at Calicut beautified and enriched my life, and her departure has left a great blank. I miss her more than I can tell. If I try to think in what that enrichment consisted, I see that it was not simply her affection, her sympathy, her personality, at once so simple, so noble, and so profound. Above all her charms with which she was so richly endowed, she was possessed of something which she longed to impart to others. It was the peace and love of God shed abroad in her heart. She did not often speak of her inner life, but that life shone out with a brilliancy which every one could see.

Whenever I saw Renée even for a moment, and for ever so trifling a cause, I always gained something from her, I understood better what should be a life with God and for God. Without in the

least intending it, she preached by her example, "without words." She was always sweet and patient, never grumbling, ready to help others without thinking of herself; ready to sympathize with the joys and troubles of those around her, whether missionaries or native Christians, ready to excuse or to forgive. She never judged or spoke evil of others. She had, however, a very good judgment, and her gentleness was not from weakness of character, it was from strength which was the gift of God.

I am sure that the secret of her life was communion with her Heavenly Father. She prayed much and also read the Bible much. It was the most important thing of all in her eyes. After breakfast she used to go with her husband to a room at the back of the house for their worship, which often occupied a long time. One morning when I went to see Renée, and expected to find her very busy, the servant said, "Master and mistress are praying, and I can't disturb them." Ah yes, this was the fountain of life from which Renée used to draw, and this is why, during her short life, she was such a blessing to others.

[*From Mme. Schwab, Betgeri.*]

. . . Her love was reflected in her features. Her simple, natural manners, and the zeal with which she entered into whatever had to be done, made a great impression on our Christians, and they

weep with me. She lived a victorious life, and she was ready to meet her Saviour. . . . I have just been into her "Sanctuary," the little room where she communed with God, and there I knelt down and cried and sobbed! O my Renée, will you never come back to Betgeri? We want your love and your prayers so badly! . . . I had the great privilege of living with her during the last few weeks of her life of love, and I hope that the remembrance of her will be a source of blessing to me. And how she bore the souls of our Christians upon her heart!

The inner life of Renée was so ripe that I can understand better now how God was preparing her for Himself. I mourn for her as David mourned for Jonathan! May the God of all comfort heal your wounded hearts, and comfort us also, here in India, where we are suffering with you. Our Christians are very much upset, and beg me to send you their sympathy. When I take the little Shanti in my arms (a foundling in whom Renée took an interest), I can't help the tears coming when I think of her adopted mother.

[*From Mme. Burckhardt.*]

PALAGOL, March 1919.

. . . She has been a friend and an encouragement to us all. She made a great impression upon us by her simplicity, her naturalness, her affection for each of us, and her holy life, one with her Saviour

in everything. She could not bear to give trouble ; and set us all an example of unselfishness and self-denial even in the smallest things. She knew so well how to comfort without saying much, and nobody could withstand her great love. Renée will always be among us, encouraging us, inciting to more love, and teaching us to put aside everything that does not tend to the advancement of the kingdom of God.

[*From the Same.*]

DHARWAR, October 6, 1919.

I often go to Betgeri, and I lodge in the room that was Renée's. I love to go into that little room and live over again those last weeks that she was there, so active and happy. She is always near to us, our Renée ! How often her presence revived my courage ! Quite lately I dreamed that she was sitting beside my bed, and I kissed her fondly and said : "Renée, don't go away ; stay with us !" Then she answered me with her sweet smile, "I am always with you ! "

THE END

This book is sold for the benefit of The Kanarese Evangelical Mission. Readers who would like to make a gift for this Mission should send to : Secrétariat de la Mission Kanarese Évangélique, rue de Bourg 35, Lausanne, Switzerland.

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